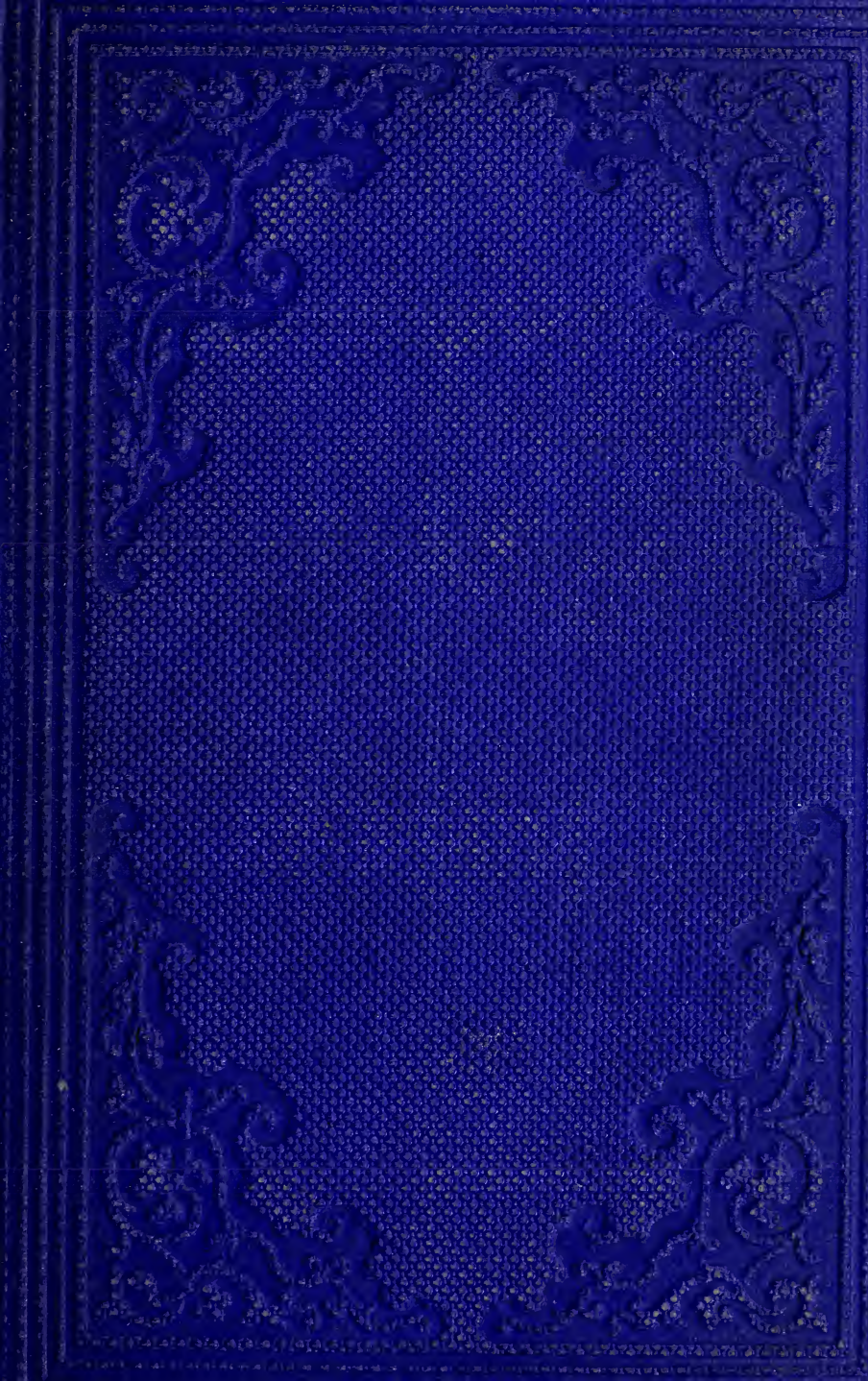




LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

BX9577

Chap.

Copyright No.

Shelf *LH39P32*

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



149

Sept. May 17. 1861

Jacob Hefenstem
Authy

A PASTOR'S APPEALS.

A

PASTOR'S APPEALS:

A SERIES OF

Sermons on Important Subjects

CONNECTED WITH

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE AND EXPERIENCE.

BY

JACOB HELFFENSTEIN, D.D.



PHILADELPHIA:

HENRY B. ASHMEAD, BOOK AND JOB PRINTER,
Nos. 1102 AND 1104 Sansom Street.

1861.

Bx9577
H39P3

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1861,

BY JACOB HELFFENSTEIN, D. D.,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court for the Eastern District of
Pennsylvania.

20 426

TO
THE BELOVED PEOPLE OF HIS CHARGE,
WHOM HE HAS LONG SERVED IN THE
MINISTRY OF THE GOSPEL,
IS
THIS VOLUME RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,
BY
THEIR FRIEND AND PASTOR,
THE AUTHOR.

P R E F A C E.

ANOTHER volume of Sermons! Is not the supply already abundant? Will it be read? Will it accomplish any good? To these questions we have only to say: We have followed our convictions of duty,—results we leave with God. We know that a Sermon, as it appears in print, is often a very different thing from what it is as it falls from the lips of the living preacher. Printed Sermons, however, are not necessarily dry, and we regard it as one of the favorable signs of the times, that productions of this kind are increasingly in demand, and are, perhaps, more extensively read than in almost any previous age.

The following Discourses were prepared by the author in his ordinary course of ministerial duty,

and without any direct reference to publication. They are now committed to the press, with the earnest desire and expectation that they may subserve the cause of truth, holiness and salvation.

GERMANTOWN, Pa., April 10th, 1861.

CONTENTS.

SERMON I.

	PAGE
PARADISE LOST	13

SERMON II.

PARADISE REGAINED	31
-----------------------------	----

SERMON III.

ANGELIC RESEARCH	53
----------------------------	----

SERMON IV.

HUMAN DEPRAVITY	73
---------------------------	----

SERMON V.

THE FOUNTAIN OPENED; OR, HEAVEN'S ANTIDOTE FOR SIN	92
---	----

SERMON VI.

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE CROSS . . .	PAGE 111
------------------------------------	-------------

SERMON VII.

THE ABILITY OF CHRIST TO SAVE . . .	134
-------------------------------------	-----

SERMON VIII.

MEN MAY BE SAVED IF THEY WILL . . .	156
-------------------------------------	-----

SERMON IX.

NAAMAN, THE SYRIAN LEPER; OR, PROUD MAN RE- JECTING A FREE SALVATION . . .	176
---	-----

SERMON X.

REGENERATION AN INSTANTANEOUS CHANGE . . .	196
--	-----

SERMON XI.

FAITH DEFINED AND ILLUSTRATED . . .	215
-------------------------------------	-----

SERMON XII.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN DIVINE AND HUMAN AGENCY IN THE WORK OF SALVATION .	237
--	-----

SERMON XIII.

EXPERIMENTAL EVIDENCE OF CHRISTIANITY .	255
---	-----

CONTENTS.

xi

SERMON XIV.

	PAGE
THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT	274

SERMON XV.

THE TRIAL AND DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN CHAR- ACTER	292
---	-----

SERMON XVI.

HOLDING FAST OUR PROFESSION	312
-------------------------------------	-----

SERMON XVII.

TRIUMPH OVER DEATH AND THE GRAVE . .	334
--------------------------------------	-----

SERMON I.

PARADISE LOST.

So he drove out the man : and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden, cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.—GEN. iii. 24.

THERE is no event recorded either on the page of sacred or profane history, in which man has a deeper interest, than the circumstances of his sad and ruinous apostacy. How came man to fall from his original integrity, and to involve himself in guilt and misery? The question is one which has perplexed the human mind in all ages of the world. The fact that our race has degenerated, that sin everywhere prevails, and that its dreadful ravages are everywhere felt, is too palpable to be overlooked or ignored. But how are we to account for the melancholy fact? How came man to degenerate? Why is he not now what it might be supposed he must have been when he first came from the hand of his benevolent Creator? This problem the Bible alone can solve. The single chapter before us throws more light on this deeply interesting, yet mysterious subject, than was eli-

cited by the profoundest researches of human reason for centuries. It is a chapter full of instruction and warning. The inspired penman had just recorded the history of man's wonderful creation; here he records the affecting story of his moral ruin.

The subject of our present discourse will be *Paradise Lost*.

We propose to consider the occasion and circumstances of this loss, together with the fearful evils which it involves.

I. *How was Paradise lost?*

When God had created the earth with its sublime and variegated scenery, he finally, as the crowning act, called into being man. Him he formed in his own image, and after his own likeness, endowing him not only with a spiritual nature by which he was allied to the author of his existence, but also with a character that assimilated him to infinite purity. "God made man upright," "created him in righteousness and true holiness."

Possessed of the powers of moral agency, he became the proper subject of law—a law which in its essential properties was the same as that which was subsequently proclaimed from Mount Sinai, and which was engraved on tables of stone, as a rule of conduct to man in every age.

As a particular test of their fidelity, the primitive pair were also laid under a specific and positive injunction, by which they were prohibited from a certain indulgence, under the penalty of death. "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." This tree probably received its name from the fact that Adam, by eating of its fruit, would "acquire the knowledge of good by *losing it*, and of evil by *experiencing it*."

This prohibition furnished the occasion of the temptation which was afterwards suggested, and by which man was enticed into sin. Moved with enmity against God, and with envy towards the happy pair, Satan now ventures upon the bold attempt to spoil the work of the Creator's hands, and plunge our race into misery and ruin.

Concealing himself under the form of a serpent, he makes his assault with the utmost sagacity. On a certain occasion, as the mother of our race walks abroad unattended by her companion, she approaches the interdicted tree. The fruit hung bending from its branches, in all its attractions; but remembering the prohibition of her Maker, she recoiled at the very idea of eating or even touching it. The enemy, who had been lurking

in the shades of Paradise, watching the most favorable moment of assault, now presents himself under the appearance of an innocent and perhaps beautiful animal, and succeeds in securing the attention of the enraptured woman. She gazes upon the form before her with intense pleasure, when suddenly the fascinating creature accosts her with the inquiry, "Hath God said ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" Fixing her eye upon the tempting fruit, she replied, "We may not eat of it, lest we die." The tempter now suggests that there must certainly be some mistake here, recommends her to put the matter to a test, assuring her that the inviting fruit, so far from doing her any injury, would communicate to her superior wisdom—that she would be as God, knowing good and evil. The point was gained. Eve gazes upon the fruit with an eager desire to ascertain the truth of the assertion, and forgetting, at that unguarded moment, the prohibition of Heaven, she stretched forth her hand and ate, and by that one rash act sealed her doom, together with the doom of all her posterity.

Such is the brief yet melancholy record of man's apostacy. Whatever difficulties may be supposed to be connected with it, the facts are not to be questioned. We are told that the punishment is altogether disproportioned to the crime. Infidelity

sneers at the idea that the simple act of eating an apple, as it has chosen to call the fruit, could entail such unutterable evil.

It must be admitted, however, that as the sovereign ruler of the Universe, God has a perfect right to establish such tests of obedience as, in his infinite wisdom, he may see proper. It was for him to say what fruits of the garden might be eaten, and what might be interdicted. In making the prohibition he was influenced solely by benevolence. He desired not the misery of his creatures, but their happiness, secured to them as the reward of their tried and unwavering obedience. The injunction, moreover, was one easy to be kept, and for the violation of which there could be no excuse. Surrounded with fruits of every variety, which the primitive pair were permitted to eat without restraint, what possible inducement could there be to disregard the command of their Maker in reference to that single tree?

The act was entirely voluntary. Tempted as they were, they freely yielded to the temptation. If they had power to fall, they had also power to stand.

The sin, though an individual act, was marked with peculiar aggravations—involving unbelief, pride, ambition, presumption, and the basest ingratitude. It admitted, therefore, of no apology

or palliation. The very attempt of the transgressors to justify themselves betrays their guilt, and the verdict of conscience fully sanctions the verdict of Heaven.

The sinfulness of an action depends not on its comparative insignificance, but upon its relation to the law of God. The violation of any divine command, unimportant as it may appear in itself, involves the principle of rebellion, and virtually dissolves every tie of moral obligation that binds us to the Eternal throne. It is an explicit declaration of independence of the divine government, an insurrection against the divine supremacy, and a bold attempt to wrest the sceptre of dominion from Jehovah's hands. It is an open avowal of our determination to set up our own judgment and will in opposition to those of the All-wise Ruler of the Universe; of our purpose to walk according to the sight of our eyes, and the desire of our hearts, regardless of any higher authority or power. Thus, whosoever offends in one point becomes guilty of the whole.

Call not, then, any act of transgression trivial. Go back to Paradise, and see what a single sin has done. That single sin has robbed us of our Eden, and a single sin, unrepented of, will close the gates of heaven against us forever.

II. We have now seen how Paradise was lost; let us next consider *what this loss involves*.

1. It includes *the loss of the place*. With the name of Eden we associate everything lovely and blissful. The very name signifies *pleasure*. It was a garden planted by God himself as the happy residence of the primitive pair, and abounding with everything that could please the eye, gratify the taste, or in any way administer enjoyment to the senses. Not a plant, flower, or tree is wanting to complete the charm. Refreshing streams diffused themselves over the whole extent, imparting the richest verdure and fertility, while the air continually resounded with notes of sweetest melody—the feathered tribes all joining with man, the Lord of creation, to render to their Maker their hymns of praise.

“There youthful springs salute the enraptured eye,
Unfading verdure, and a gladsome sky;
Eternal zephyrs through the groves prevail,
And incense breathes in every balmy gale;
No irksome change the unvaried climate knows,
Of heat alternate, and alternate snows.
A genial power the tender herbage feeds,
And decks with every sweet the smiling meads,
Diffuses soft perfume from every flower,
And clothes with lasting shade each rural bower.”

Among the various productions that abounded in that scene of beauty, was “*the tree of life*;”

so denominated because it was the pledge or symbol of perpetual life. To this tree, there is evident allusion in the description given by John of the New Jerusalem : "In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month ; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

Changed as is the aspect of our world in consequence of sin, there are still spots upon which the eye dwells with rapture — scenes of beauty and sublimity, which it is impossible to behold but with unspeakable admiration and pleasure. What, then, must have been the abode of man in innocence ? Order, beauty and variety, presented themselves at every view ; and everything that could tend, both to the highest sensitive and intellectual enjoyment, was possessed in the richest abundance.

Such was the happy home of our first parents previous to their sad defection, and from which they are now driven under the displeasure of heaven. As life had now been forfeited, it is unfit that they should any longer have access to the appointed seal. "So he drove out the man ; and he placed at the east of the Garden of Eden, cherubims, and a flaming sword, which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life."

How reluctantly must they have left the spot endeared to them by so many attractions, and connected with such delightful associations! How wishfully must they have looked, for the last time, upon all they were now leaving; and how bitter their reflections that they had made the forfeiture by their own folly! "It is always painful," says a certain writer, "to quit a favorite spot. The heart lingers long behind, and employs the pencil of memory to paint the absent scene. Adam and Eve must have experienced inexpressible emotions when driven from their primeval residence, where all the elements, all the seasons, and all beings had contributed to their enjoyment. Never, never could they forget those landscapes on which the eye paused with rapture; never, never could they cease to remember its rich productions, its oft-frequented vales, and hills, and rivers, and woods; never, never could they obliterate from their memory the bright sunshine of heavenly love that beamed upon them there."

How affecting the lamentation of Eve, as thus described by the author of "Paradise Lost."

"O, unexpected stroke, worse than of death!
Must I thus leave thee, Paradise! Thus leave
Thee, native soil! These happy walls and shades,
Fit haunt of gods? Where I had hope to spend,
Quiet, though sad, the respite of that day
That must be mortal to us both. O flowers,

That never will in other climate grow,
My early visitation and my last,
At even, which I bred up with tender hand
From the first op'ning bud, and gave you names.
Who now shall rear you to the sun, or rank
Your tribes and water from the ambrosial fount :
Thee, lastly nuptial bower, by me adorned,
With what to sight, or smell, was sweet, from thee
How shall I part, and whither wander down
Into a lower world, to this obscure
And wild? How shall we breathe in other air
Less pure, accustomed to immortal fruits?"

2. Connected with the loss of Paradise, was also *the loss of the divine friendship and favor*. In their innocency, the first pair enjoyed the most intimate communion with their Maker. Then they could speak to him as a familiar friend, and the smile of his face constituted their highest felicity. Nor is it improbable that in some visible or sensible manner he was accustomed to manifest to them his regard. Thus, we read of his speaking directly to them, and subsequently, of his voice being heard in the cool of the day in the garden.

But now the tie that bound them to their Father and friend is dissolved, and all intercourse between heaven and earth is cut off. No longer could God look upon the creature, once bearing his own moral likeness, but now defiled with sin, with the least approbation; while man, instead of courting the

divine presence, flees from it in confusion and dread. O, misery of miseries, thus to be separated from the fountain of life and bliss! What in creation can make up the sad loss? Who but the eternal God himself can ever satisfy the boundless desires of the human heart, and constitute for it any adequate portion? What a dreary waste must this world have appeared to man after the light of heaven had thus been extinguished! Everything around him wore the aspect of gloom. Every flower would appear to droop; the feathered tribes appeared as if they had suspended their songs; and nature everywhere gave "signs of woe that all was lost."

3. Man now became *the victim of remorse and painful forebodings*. From the moment that he sinned, all his peace and hopes withered. He felt that he had fallen from his original dignity, and that his nature had become degraded and corrupted. As a transgressor, conscious guilt weighs upon his spirit, and in fearful suspense, he dreads the speedy execution of deserved vengeance. Wherever he looks, he imagines that he beholds the tokens of evil. Every rustling leaf leads him to shrink back with horror. Every sound becomes one of terror; and in his folly, he endeavors to hide himself from the eye of Omniscience in the thick shades of the garden. How startling the

summons that reached him in his imagined shelter! "Adam, where art thou?" He endeavors to justify his act; but the very plea he offers only establishes his guilt. The trembling fugitives cast the blame upon each other; they even have the effrontery to implicate their Maker; but there is a witness within them that testifies to their guilt, and pronounces them worthy of death.

4. Man now fell under the *fearful penalty of heaven*. "In the day thou eatest thereof," — that is, of the forbidden fruit, — "thou shalt surely die;" or more literally, "dying, thou shalt die." Spiritually, he had died already. He was dead in trespasses and in sins — dead to all spiritual perceptions—dead to all holy affections—dead to all sacred enjoyments. And now, too, his body became *mortal*. The seed of dissolution began to work in his system, until the fair fabric should be laid in utter ruins, and dust should return to its original dust.

The very ground is cursed for his sake, and instead of its former productiveness, it is doomed to sterility; and in the sweat of his face man must henceforth eat his bread.

Earth, before a Paradise, becomes a vale of tears. Man's life becomes one of toil and sorrow, of disappointment and vexation. He is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward. The whole

creation groaneth and travaileth in pain under the direful curse.

But this is not all. Man became justly liable to *eternal death*. Had he been dealt with according to his deserts, he would at once have been consigned to unmingled wretchedness and despair. Hope would have fled forever. The frown of God would have withered his spirit, and the undying worm of remorse would have preyed upon him in all its terrors. Such, undoubtedly, would have been his destiny, had the penalty of the violated law been fully carried into execution, and had infinite mercy made no provision for his redemption.

5. The consequences of the apostacy did not terminate with the first offenders, but *have extended themselves to all their unhappy posterity*. Such was the relation which Adam bore to the race, that *his character is their character, his ruin their ruin*. Had he retained his original integrity, there is reason to believe that his descendants would have been secured in their obedience also. His fall became the fall of humanity, rendering it absolutely certain that we should all inherit the same moral nature, and involve ourselves in the same condemnation. Not that we are punished for his sin *irrespective of our personal depravity and guilt*; but his disobedience has so vitiated our constitution, and

placed us in such circumstances, that as soon as we begin to act at all, we invariably act wrong.

We pretend not to speculate on this awful and mysterious subject. All we have to do is with the simple fact as revealed to us in the scriptures, and as confirmed by our own experience and observation. The curse which fell upon our first parents has evidently fallen upon us all. Every one that contemplates the havoc which death is making in our world, together with the labor and toil required of man, to cultivate the earth, and obtain the means of subsistence, must see that the sentence respects not the first pair only, but all their posterity. The effects of the apostacy are every where visible. Every grave, every funeral, every disease, and infirmity, reminds us that our earth is under the frown of Heaven. "By the offence of one judgment has come unto all men to condemnation." "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

REMARKS.

1. We may learn from this subject that *our danger is often greatest when we feel the least apprehension*. It was so in the present instance. Even in the delightful walks of Paradise, there was an enemy plotting the ruin of our race. And that same

enemy is still abroad in the world, endeavoring by all his arts to decoy us into sin, and plunge us into ruin. With the same malignant hatred, he is striving to perpetuate the evils which he has entailed. He approaches us, just as he did Eve, at the most favorable moment, and in the most insinuating manner. He understands our frame, and our circumstances, and adapts his temptations to each specific case. He gains access to us through the eye, the ear, and the various appetites and instincts of our nature. And such is our natural tendency to evil, that our hearts often yield a ready response to his seductions. If he could exert such power over minds yet uncorrupted, how imminent must be our danger, prone as we are to sin as the sparks fly upward. Where, then, is our security? Certainly not in ourselves. Who among us can grapple successfully with a foe so insidious and powerful? We must guard against his assaults. We must watch and pray that we enter not into temptation; or, if enticed to evil, distrusting our own strength, we must fly to God as our only refuge. Our defence is in him alone. "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil;" "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." Beware, "lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve, through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

2. Another remark suggested by this subject is this : *How infinite must be the displeasure of God against sin.* It is to sin we are to trace all the woes that have fallen upon our race. Sin has closed against us the gates of Paradise, shut us out from communion with Heaven, alienated us from the great source of moral excellence, darkened our understandings, perverted our affections, and filled us with the fore-bodings of coming wrath. Sin has planted every thorn, occasioned every pang, and dug every grave. O ! sin, what hast thou not done ! But for sin, suffering would be wholly unknown. Our earth would still have remained a Paradise, and humanity retained all its original dignity and glory. Think of what man was once ; think of what he is now. How has the crown fallen from his head ! How has the bright gold become dim ! Oh ! what a fall was that when he no longer kept his first estate, how deep, how ruinous, how hopeless !

Who, then, can trifle with sin ? Who can flatter himself with the hope of impunity ? “ The wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.” From the consequences of sin there can be no escape, save through the provisions of the gospel. “ Be sure your sin will find you out.”

3. *How deeply affecting is the condition of every*

unredeemed man. Just what the primitive pair were, after their deplorable fall, every man, yet out of Christ, is now. You inherit the same corrupt nature ; you are equally destitute of the holy image of your Maker ; you lie under the same sentence of condemnation ; you are exposed to the same complicated woes ; and you are as utterly ruined and helpless. Your fall is not *partial* but *total*. The contagion of sin has spread throughout your whole moral nature ; and when its ravages are finished, the result must be death eternal. Oh ! what a melancholy spectacle is man in his moral ruin ! man wherever he may be found ; man in Christian as well as in heathen lands ; man with all the refinements of social life, and with all his natural virtues and amiability. Possessed as he is still of all his original faculties, the whole machinery of his nature is spiritually deranged. All his powers are under a fearful blight. Though made for the enjoyment of God, he is separated from him at an immeasurable distance. Though formed to glorify God, he lives wholly for himself. Such, O man, is thy condition,—a wanderer from God ; and, what is still more affecting, no disposition to return, revolting more and more, until the alienation becomes final and immutable. Oh ! that you did but realize your misery while yet there is hope. Oh ! that we could hear from your lips

some expression of solicitude to escape from a condition so deplorable and alarming. Never will you be in serious earnest to be saved, until you are convinced that you are *lost*. You must know the depth of your apostacy, or you can never know the preciousness of redemption.

SERMON II.

PARADISE REGAINED.

To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.—REV. ii. 7.

IN a former discourse, we contemplated *Paradise Lost*. The subject of the present will be *Paradise Regained*.

Sad, indeed, would have been our condition, had the Scriptures closed with the melancholy tale of human apostacy. Man, though created but a “little lower than the angels,” is exhibited to us as plunged into the deepest guilt and misery. From this ruin, he has no power to recover himself. The blessings which he has forfeited, he can never regain by any act of his own. If he is ever redeemed, his deliverance must come from some other source. But who will undertake the stupendous work? Who will make an adequate atonement for sin? Who will open the passage to the tree of life? Who will restore a nature so utterly fallen and degenerate? Midnight darkness broods over our race. Angels may weep, yet have they no

power to save ; but, lo, a voice is heard, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." That was the first dawn of hope to the desponding mind of man ; the first intimation of a Saviour, through whose atoning blood sinners were to be rescued from the power of the enemy, and reinstated to the divine favor. The tempter had regarded his purpose as fully accomplished ; henceforth, he claims this world as his own. "These hills, these valleys, these rivers, these beings, are now mine, and I will employ them for my own purposes." His triumph appears complete. The condition of our race appears as utterly hopeless. But he who had permitted the fall of man, had purposed to make it the occasion of the most glorious display of his own power and grace. The Scriptures not only make known to us our spiritual malady, but also our all-sufficient remedy ; not only our fall in Adam, but also our redemption in Christ. Paradise, though lost, may be restored ; for thus it is written, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

I. Let us consider *by whom* our Lost Paradise is restored.

This wonderful achievement is accomplished by no other than Jesus Christ, "the second Adam ;"

for, "as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive." "If through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. As by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life; for as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

The evident idea of the Apostle is, that Christ sustains a relation to our race similar to that which was sustained by Adam; that as the fall of the one has involved the depravity and ruin of all his posterity, so the mediation of the other lays the ground for the restoration of all, who, in the exercise of faith, are united to him as their spiritual head, and become personally interested in his purchased redemption.

Wonderful, indeed, was the manner in which the Son of God secured for us our lost inheritance.

First of all, *he takes upon him that very nature* which he designs to restore. "The word was made flesh." He became a man, like ourselves; assuming both a human body and a human soul, sin only excepted; for it was "the seed of the woman," who, according to the first promise, was to "bruise

the serpent's head." "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; for verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved him, to be made like unto his brethren." (Heb. ii. 14-17.)

This was a step indispensably necessary. The Son of God must obey and suffer in the same nature that had sinned; and possessing as he does, all the feelings of our humanity, he knows how to sympathize with our condition, and to represent our cause before the throne, where he "ever liveth to make intercession for us."

Another important part of the work of Christ, in recovering our lost paradise, consisted in *honoring the divine law, and manifesting the displeasure of God against sin.*

God exercises over intelligent beings a moral government. He has placed them all under a law of the highest perfection, obedience to which is indispensable to the happiness of the moral universe. To maintain the authority of that law, it is necessary that every transgression should "receive its just recompense of reward." When man sinned, he fell under the threatened penalty. How, then, can that penalty be remitted, without, at the same time, weakening the force of the precept, and di-

minishing the lustre of the eternal throne? The fearful sentence had gone forth, "the soul that sinneth it shall die." If the sinner is now pardoned, what becomes of the divine veracity, the divine justice, the divine honor? In some way must the Sovereign of Creation manifest his regard to the violated law, and his infinite abhorrence of sin, or his throne must be subverted, and his authority be brought into utter contempt. The atonement was an expedient designed to meet these very difficulties, answering all the purposes of the actual punishment of the transgressor himself, and thus opening the way for the consistent exercise of mercy towards all the truly penitent and believing. "God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." "Him hath God set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

Thus has the Son of God, by his obedience unto death, magnified the law, and made it honorable. He has proclaimed its justice, and armed it even with double power. He has shown that its authority can never be set aside; that its violation is an infinite evil, while, at the same time, he has rendered the pardon of the guilty possible, and removed every hinderance to their salvation, but

what exists in their own voluntary refusal of the mercy revealed to them in the gospel.

To defeat the malignant designs of Satan, and to rescue his miserable subjects from their thralldom, it was necessary that *the Son of God should meet the adversary in personal combat, and prove himself the victor.* Painful, indeed, was the struggle. The tempter had already succeeded in his assault upon the first Adam, and now he flatters himself that he will be equally successful in his assault upon the second; and thus effectually defeat the whole purpose of human redemption. The parties meet. The strife begins. All heaven is moved. Such a contest had never been witnessed before, and will never be witnessed again. On its issue is suspended the fate of a world. The Son of God resists even unto blood; but sore and protracted as is the combat, he comes off victorious; he bruises the serpent's head. The prince of this world could find nothing in him. The mighty conqueror "having spoiled principalities and powers, made a show of them openly, triumphing over them." "The Apostle alludes to the manner of a Roman triumph, in which the conqueror was drawn in a chariot of state, attended by his officers and soldiers; the principal prisoners followed in chains; and all the treasures and trophies gained from the vanquished enemy, were displayed to adorn the

procession. Thus Messiah subdued the strength and policy of the powers of darkness, in the hour of his lowest humiliation, when he hung and expired upon the cross, and triumphed over them, gloriously leading captivity captive, when he ascended on high. Satan, though still an enemy to his church and cause, is despoiled of his dominion; his power is only permissive, and in his fiercest assaults, he is limited by bounds which he cannot pass; by a chain which he cannot break. And all his attempts are controlled and overruled to the furtherance of the cause which he would suppress, and to the good of the persons whom he would worry and destroy.”—*Newton*.

II. We have seen *by whom* Paradise is restored: let us now consider *to whom* it is restored, or the characters who are to enjoy this unspeakable privilege: “*To him that overcometh* will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.”

To *overcome* expresses both *conflict* and *victory*. “The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.” No man can be saved without a contest. As the enemy assaulted the Master, so will he also assault the disciples. “We wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with

principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places."

A life of piety *begins* with a warfare. While the strong man holds the palace, his goods are in peace, but no sooner does the sinner attempt to break away from his spiritual thralldom than he enters upon a strife. Reluctant to yield the power which he has so long maintained, the adversary leaves no means untried to hold fast his subjects; at one time, perhaps, suggesting that their condition is wholly desperate, and that all efforts, therefore, to escape will be utterly unavailing; at another, that as they may find a more favorable season in future, they might as well dismiss all idea of attending to their salvation for the present. What a painful struggle now goes on within a man's heart, between duty and inclination, between conscience and feeling. What numerous difficulties appear to lie in the way of his return to God. Temptation succeeds temptation, and none but he who is "stronger than the strong man armed," can insure the victory. Happy they who through divine grace are enabled to overcome in this hour of conflict, and who are "translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son."

But does the strife now end? Far, very far from it. The whole life of a Christian is one of

warfare. Every step he takes in the way to heaven, is over disputed ground. New temptations assail him from day to day. The enemy meets him at every turn, continually varying his mode of assault according to circumstances. Sometimes he assumes the form of a "roaring lion," and strives to terrify; at other times, the form of "an angel of light," with the view to deceive. No arts, no stratagems does he leave unemployed to draw the soul back to its former bondage, and triumph over its ultimate ruin.

But blessed be God, the Christian not only fights; he also *overcomes*. "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

This triumph is achieved alone by faith in the blood of the lamb. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." "And they overcame by the blood of the lamb, and by the word of their testimony."

"I asked them whence their victory came,
They, with united breath,
Ascribe their conquest to the Lamb;
Their triumph to his death."

III. We proceed now to inquire, *What is included in Paradise regained.*

1. It includes the *remission of the legal penalty*

under which man by transgression has fallen. As a sinner he lies under sentence of death, not merely death temporal, but death eternal. The execution of that sentence may for a while be suspended, but it still rests upon him in all its untold horrors. From this condemnation there is no deliverance but by pardon, and that pardon can be extended only through the mediation of Christ. Until the sinner is pardoned he can have no security, no hope, no peace. But no sooner is the curse removed, than he is placed in a new position. There is now no more any condemnation. Over him the second death has no power; he has peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; and having thus become reconciled to God through the blood of the cross, he is placed in a new relation, and becomes fully entitled to all the privileges of the New Covenant. “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died.” “I,” says Jesus, “have poured out my blood for that trembling sinner. The curse that he so justly merited, has fallen upon me. I was wounded for his transgressions, and bruised for his iniquities; and now, clinging as he does to my cross as his only refuge, pleading my merits as his only hope, shall he still be suffered to perish? Never, never shall he again fall under condemnation. Henceforth his sins, however numerous, are all fully remitted forever.”

2. Paradise regained implies not only a restoration to the divine favor, but also to the *divine image*, the same moral image in which man was created, and which was effaced by the apostacy. Hence, believers are said to be “renewed in the spirit of their minds, after the image of him who created them”—to be partakers of the divine nature, partakers of the divine holiness. “We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory.”

At present the resemblance, indeed, is far from being complete. There are blemishes that still adhere to the best men. The process of assimilation to the divine likeness is, however, going forward, and when finished, the Son of God will present his church before the throne of his Father, “without spot or wrinkle.” The last stain of moral corruption will now be effectually removed, and human nature, once sunk to such depths of sin and misery, will be fully restored both to its original purity and happiness.

3. Paradise regained implies, also, a *restoration to a state of intimate and endearing communion with God*. With such communion man was favored previous to his apostacy. The most affectionate and delightful intercourse was then kept up between the Creator and the creature. This intercourse,

interrupted by sin, is renewed in man's redemption. We who were sometime afar off, are now brought nigh by the blood of Christ. Again are we permitted to approach God with confidence, and pour out our hearts to him with freedom. He adopts us into his family, receives us to his paternal arms, visits us with the tokens of his love, and deeply sympathizes with us in all our wants and sorrows. "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ."

This fellowship commenced on earth, is consummated in heaven. There we shall dwell in his immediate presence, behold him without a veil, and rejoice forever in the light of his face. "As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness."

4. Paradise regained includes, further, *the restoration of the body to a state of immortality*. The primitive state of man was an embodied state, and such also will be his state when his redemption is complete. "We wait for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." "I will ransom them from the power of the grave. I will redeem them from death: O! death, I will be thy plagues; O! grave, I will be thy destruction." "This corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality."

All those infirmities and diseases which sin has

brought on the human system, will now be done away. The redeemed, it is said, "shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death; neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed way."

The *model* of the believer's resurrection will not be the body of Adam, even in its original state of incorruption and beauty, but the glorified body of the Son of God; thus exalting our entire nature to the highest possible dignity and perfection. We are to bear not the image of the earthly, but the image of the heavenly. "He shall change our vile body, and fashion it like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

Not only will the body of the believer be raised, but greatly *improved*. However "fearfully and wonderfully" it may now be made, it can bear no comparison, in its organization and appearance, to the glorious body that will burst forth from the tomb on the morning of the resurrection. "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body."

Thus it is that the Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the devil. His triumph will be complete. Even the last enemy shall be destroyed, and death shall be swallowed in victory.

The glorious enterprise of rescuing this ruined world from the hands of the destroyer is going forward. Millions already redeemed unto God, are presented before the throne as the rich trophies of a Redeemer's grace; and millions more, yet unborn, shall be given to him as the conquests of his love, and as the crown of his eternal rejoicing.

The judgment day will be the day of final and complete redemption. That will be "the time of the restitution of all things." The Son of God will now subdue all things to himself, and while he effectually puts his foes beneath his feet, he will bear away with triumph the innumerable hosts of the ransomed to "a kingdom that cannot be moved." Then the earth itself shall be delivered from the physical effects of the apostacy, and probably restored to its pristine beauty; for it is to this renovation the apostle appears to refer when he says, "The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God; for the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope; because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the

bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God." "The heavens," says Peter, "being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

We have been speaking of Paradise *regained*, but we may advance still further—it *will be more than regained*.

Delightful as was the Eden of the primitive pair, we have reason to believe that the abode of the redeemed will be far superior. Instead of an earthly paradise they shall inherit a heavenly.

"There happier bowers than Eden's bloom,
Nor sin nor sorrow know;
Blest seats! through rude and stormy seas,
I onward press to you."

Nothing can exceed the beauty and sublimity of the description given of the residence of the redeemed Church. "And he showed me a pure river of water," Rev. xxii. 1-5.

The *happiness* which those who are redeemed will hereafter experience, will probably far exceed that which by sin they had forfeited. They will be brought into a nearer relation to God, and enjoy with him far more intimate communion. They will be favored with richer manifestations of his glory, and praise him in more rapturous strains of

devotion. The remembrance of what they once were, and the contemplation of that amazing grace to which they owe all their deliverance, will call forth from their bursting hearts notes of praise, which, "like the sound of many waters," shall echo through heaven's eternal domains for ever and ever.

Paradise regained, *shall no more be lost*. The happiness of the redeemed will not only be complete, but *permanent*. No tempter will ever be permitted to intrude into their blissful abode; no snares will ever be laid for their ruin. The same grace that preserved them on earth will preserve them forever in heaven. "I will give unto them," says Jesus, "eternal life."

Thus, where sin hath abounded, grace much more abounds. "Not as the offence so also is the free gift." Christ came not only that we might have life, but that we might have it "*more abundantly*."

"In him the tribes of Adam boast,
More blessings than their father lost."

REMARKS.

1. *What a glorious work is the work of human redemption!* The political redemption of a nation from despotism or anarchy, is regarded as an important achievement; but it can bear no kind of

comparison with the redemption of Christ. The one delivers from *temporal* evils, the other from *eternal*; the one contemplates man in his connection with the present world, the other in his connection with the future. The redemption of even a *single* soul is an event of unspeakable moment; what then must be the redemption of millions! How deep the misery from which they are rescued! how exalted the happiness to which they are elevated! It was a glorious display of divine wisdom, power, and goodness, to *create* man, but how much richer the display to renew and save him!

In accomplishing the work of creation God had only to issue the mandate, and his order was obeyed. "He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." "He said, Let there be light, and there was light." But in accomplishing the work of redemption there was demanded an infinite sacrifice. The eternal God himself must become incarnate. The glories of his nature must be veiled in human flesh—precious blood must be poured forth—death and hell must be utterly vanquished.

How melancholy the state of man in his apostacy. The stately edifice which the great Architect had reared, lies in utter ruins. All the material are there, but they are all out of place, and

lie scattered in confusion on the ground. Out of this rubbish Jehovah now rears a structure even more magnificent than the former. That glorious structure is the Church, redeemed by a Saviour's blood, and renewed by his Spirit. He himself constitutes the foundation, and all his ransomed people the superstructure. The work, commenced some thousand years since, is gradually advancing, and when eventually the topstone is laid, what a revenue of praise will redound to him who has made all things new!

Or, to use another illustration. Let us suppose a watchmaker to hold in his hand a watch of most exquisite workmanship. All who behold it express the highest admiration. Suddenly some malicious person, standing by, snatches it from his hand and dashes it to the ground. Its beauty is all defaced, and none of its parts any longer perform their operations. The grief of the owner is inexpressible, and all the spectators lament that a work displaying such singular ability should have been thus ruthlessly demolished. "Stop," says the maker, "I will now show you my skill." Carefully he collects the parts together, and forms of them a watch of even superior mechanism than the former.

Thus has God acted in reference to man. When he called our race into being, he beheld his work

with infinite complacency. Angels, too, beheld it, and they shouted for joy. Sad to tell, the spirit of darkness in one moment despoiled man of his primitive glory, and apparently defeated the purpose of Heaven. It grieved God that he had made man—so entire was the ruin into which by sin he had become buried. But behold now the unsearchable wisdom, the ineffable love of Jehovah. Out of chaos proceeds order, and out of darkness light. Stooping from the skies, he raises our fallen humanity, not simply to what it was before, but even to more distinguished honor and felicity. Well may the whole intelligent universe burst forth in rapturous praise over the wonderful achievement!

“O love divine! immeasurable love!
 Stooping from heaven to earth, from earth to hell,
 Without beginning, endless, boundless love!
 Above all asking, giving far to those
 Who naught deserved, who naught deserved but death,
 Saving the vilest! saving me! O love
 Divine! O Saviour God! O Lamb once slain!
 At thought of thee, thy love, thy flowing blood,
 All thoughts decay, all things remembered fade.”

2. Let me yet remark,—*How eager should we all be to regain our lost paradise.*

The privilege is one that may now be enjoyed by every fallen son and daughter of Adam. By the one offering on the cross, an ample atonement

has been made for the sins of the world. No difficulty, consequently, exists in the way of your salvation, but what may exist in yourself. The gate of Paradise, once closed, is now thrown wide open. No flaming seraph guards its entrance. The tree of life is accessible to all, and on the banks of the river, flowing from the throne of God, you may all recline, with golden harps celebrating the triumphs of redeeming mercy. Who, then, can refuse the offer? Who can be unwilling to be saved, when salvation has been procured at such an infinite price, and is offered on such reasonable conditions? Who can be content to remain under the yoke of sin, when he may rejoice in "the glorious liberty of the Son of God?" Who can prefer death to life, misery to happiness, hell to heaven? Oh, who, when he gathers up his feet on a bed of death, and yields up his spirit into the hands of God, would not have the Saviour address to him the same words of consolation that he addressed to the penitent malefactor, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise?" If there is salvation for a poor sinner, ruined and helpless, let me have it on any terms. By the grace of God it shall be mine,—

"My soul obeys the Almighty call,
And runs to this relief."

“Turn ye to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope.” Ask not, “How came I to be plunged into sin and misery?” Rather ask, how you may be saved from them. Why perplex yourself about the origin of your disease, when you have within your reach an unfailing remedy? “How came I by my wicked heart?” said a caviller once to Dr. Nettleton. “That,” he replied, “is a question which does not concern you so much as another, namely, how you should get rid of it. You have a wicked heart, which renders you entirely unfit for the kingdom of God; and you must have a new heart, or you cannot be saved; and the question which now most deeply concerns you is, how you shall obtain it?” As the man manifested no disposition to hear anything on that subject, but still pressed the question, how he came by his wicked heart, Dr. Nettleton told him that his condition resembled that of a man who is drowning, while his friends are attempting to save his life. As he rises to the surface of the water, he exclaims, “How came I here?” “That question does not concern you now; take hold of this rope.” “But how came I here?” he asks again. “I shall not stop to answer that question now,” replies his friend. “Then I’ll drown,” says the infatuated man, and spurning all proffered aid, sinks to the bottom.

My dear hearer, the first question with you should be, not "How came I to be a sinner?" but "How shall I get rid of sin?" You know that you are a fallen being; you know that there is redemption in Christ,—lay hold, then, on the hope set before you with all the eagerness with which a drowning man seizes the rope thrown out for his rescue.

SERMON III.

ANGELIC RESEARCH.

Which things the Angels desire to look into.—1 PETER i. 12.

THE Scriptures have not only assured us of the existence of such an order of beings as Angels, but have also instructed us respecting their nature, their character, and their employments. While they are exhibited to us as creatures of exalted intelligence, and of unspotted purity, they are also distinguished for the most wonderful activity, and the most noble services. They are said to “stand in the presence of God,” and minister to him in his Holy Temple. They “excel in strength, keeping his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word.” It is their delightful service to study the divine perfections, particularly as they are displayed in the plan of human redemption, and the dispensations of grace towards the children of men. High as is their station, their attention is drawn with adoring wonder to our earth, as the grand theatre upon which is exhibited scenes of unexampled interest and glory.

The *things* referred to in the text, are those of which the Apostle had just been speaking—the things which he had represented the prophets as so earnestly desirous to understand—the great truths respecting the sufferings of Christ, and the glory which should follow—the mystery of a Saviour's incarnation and death—the plan of redemption through the blood of the cross—the effect of the Gospel in the restoration of fallen men to holiness and heaven.

The word here rendered *to look* (παραχυνῶν), we find elsewhere rendered, *stooping down*, or *stooped down*. Luke xxiv. 12; John xx. 5–11. Thus it is recorded of Peter and Mary, that when they came to the sepulchre, they *stooped down*, and looked in, hoping there to find their Lord. The phrase, as used in the text, is supposed by some to have allusion to the cherubim over the mercy-seat, who appeared as if looking down with intense interest upon the ark, eager to ascertain what it contained. The evident idea of the Apostle is, that the great facts and truths of Christianity constitute a theme upon which angels dwell with the most fixed attention, with the most ardent desire, and with adoring wonder and delight.

Whatever may be the powers and attainments of angels, they certainly cannot be omniscient. Much as they may know, they may still know

more. The divine character, plans, and purposes, are continually unfolding to their view with increased clearness. The knowledge which they acquire, is, doubtless, acquired in the exercise of those faculties with which God has endowed them. They become acquainted with truth by investigation; and it constitutes no small part of their noble employment to contemplate the displays of the divine perfections in the immensity, the variety, and the grandeur of the divine operations. That part of the universe where we dwell, our text teaches us, has for them peculiar attractions. And what is there on earth that excites such amazing interest? Is it our canals, our railroads, our telegraphs, our architecture, our works of taste, or our books of science? Is it the loftiness of our mountains, the majesty of our rivers, the fragrance of our flowers, or the beauty of our landscapes? No, it is the *Cross*—the despised Cross—the scene of a Saviour's sorrows and humiliation—redemption through the atoning sacrifice of Calvary.

And what is there here that so absorbs their attention, and calls forth such emotions of holy admiration and wonder? The grand cause of their profound research in the scheme of human redemption is, no doubt, to be found *in the rich display which it affords of the divine perfections.*

It is the delight of those exalted intelligences to behold the various manifestations which God has made of his glory, and it is principally on this account that they contemplate with such profound adoration the great scheme for recovering man to the divine image and favor.

I. *In this scheme God exhibits himself to them in an aspect entirely new.* Previously to the revelation of this design, there were *four* aspects in which he was presented to their view. They contemplated him as the *great Creator* of all things; and as they looked upon the various objects which his mighty hand had formed, those “morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy.” Next, they contemplated him as the *kind preserver and upholder of the Universe*, sustaining in existence the countless number of beings he had produced, and sending forth in every direction, the streams of his overflowing beneficence. They cried one to another, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!”

God exhibited himself to them also as a *moral Governor*, placing all created intelligences under law, and demanding of them their cordial homage and obedience. And, finally, he was made known to them *as the avenger of sin*; for they had seen

those who were once companions with them in the seats of bliss, hurled, in consequence of rebellion, from their exalted station, and doomed to eternal remorse and despair.

But in the redemption of sinners, God presented himself in a character different from any in which he had been known before. Here he was made known, not merely as Creator, Preserver, Sovereign and Judge, but as a *Saviour*. Here they behold not merely the display of wisdom, power, goodness and justice, but of certain attributes of the divine nature, which exhibit it to them in a light still more amiable and attractive. Here God has proclaimed his *mercy*. This, indeed, is only a modification of his goodness; and yet it is a form or manifestation of goodness altogether peculiar. It contemplates man not as a creature, but as a sinner. It is favor extended to the miserable and ill-deserving. Angels had before witnessed the benevolent regard of God towards the work of his hands, but now they see it displayed even towards rebels against his throne. The objects of his holy displeasure become the objects of his most tender solicitude, and those whom he might justly have spurned from his presence, are received to his special friendship.

In the redemption of sinners, they are furnished with evidence, not only of the tenderness of the

divine compassion, but also *of the riches of divine forbearance*. While they behold the eternal sovereign moved with sympathy, they behold him, at the same time, holding back the thunders of his insulted throne. When a part of their own number had fallen, transgression was immediately followed by merited punishment; and such, no doubt, they supposed would also be the consequence of human apostacy; but, lo! the sentence instead of being executed, is delayed. Man, instead of sinking at once to the regions of darkness, is permitted to retain his abode on earth; and though visited with evident tokens of divine displeasure, he still enjoys a season of gracious reprieve. How long, too, does God wait upon the rejectors of his mercy. Year after year that mercy is pressed upon the sinner. All the day long the arms of divine compassion stand open to embrace him. One call succeeds another, until at length the obdurate heart is brought to relent, or the sinner, having filled up the measure of his iniquity, is abandoned to utter ruin and despair. How must angels be astonished at such patience! When they look at sin in the light of God's countenance, it would seem to them as if it must at once be visited with deserved vengeance. How can infinite purity regard with a moment's forbearance, crimes of such fearful magnitude? How can infinite majesty endure such

aggravated provocations? Why does not Omnipotence at once crush the arm that is raised in guilty rebellion? Why is not that Sabbath-breaker, that profane swearer, cut off in the midst of his impiety? The answer of Jehovah himself is, "I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger; I will not return to destroy Ephraim; for I am God, and not man."

"Almighty goodness cries, 'Forbear,'
And straight the thunder stays."

How amazingly, too, is the *condescension* which angels see displayed towards man. How infinitely low has God stooped to raise us from our ruinous apostacy. Deity becomes united with humanity. The eternal sovereign appears to our revolted province clothed in our nature, beseeching us with tears to return to our allegiance, and dies in torture to open the way for our reconciliation. God manifested in the flesh, is one of the great mysteries of godliness. What a spectacle to admiring angels! The Lord of glory hanging upon a cross! He, who at his word, could have consigned our entire race to destruction, placing himself in the hands of his foes, and patiently enduring the most shameful indignities!

"Did ever pity stoop so low,
Dressed in divinity and blood!
Was ever rebel courted so,
In groans of an expiring God!"

Here, too, angels behold the *most astonishing self-denial*. Salvation is purchased at infinite expense. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son." The choicest gift of heaven is surrendered up for man. Oh, how much did it cost to purchase our ransom! How precious the blood that was shed to procure it! He "who was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be made rich." He who "thought it not robbery to be equal with God, made himself of no reputation, took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

II. While the scheme of redemption has unfolded to the view of angels certain attributes of God, of which they had before no manifestation, *it has also exhibited those, with which they were already acquainted, in a light increasingly clear and impressive.*

They knew that God was *benevolent*. They had rejoiced in the displays of his benevolence, not only in giving existence to the Universe, but also in the paternal care which he had shown in its preservation, and the continued supply he had afforded to all who waited before him. That he

delighted in the happiness of his creatures, they could not for a moment question; but when they beheld him looking upon our fallen race with such commiseration, as to obtain for them redemption at the stupendous sacrifice of his own Son, how did their hearts glow with transport, and with what thrilling notes did they break forth in the anthem, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good-will to men." Then they experienced joys unknown before, and a song was put into their mouth, which had never been heard even amid the hallelujahs of the skies.

They knew, too, that God was *holy*. In his nature they could discover no stain. He had formed them pure and happy. He had placed them under a law requiring perfect obedience, and they well understood that sin must be infinitely abhorrent in his sight; but now, if possible, it is presented to them as increasingly odious. Not only do they hear Jehovah expressing his utter disapprobation of man's transgression, but they behold an expedient devised for his recovery, by which the purity of the divine character shines forth with such ineffable splendor, as may well excite in the minds of his creatures the highest veneration and awe.

They had already witnessed a most impressive display of *divine justice*. They had seen their

fallen brethren exiled from heaven, and shut up under chains of eternal darkness. They had seen our earth, exhibiting fearful signs that all was lost, "the whole creation groaning and travailing in pain" under the displeasure of the Almighty, still they might not have known that justice was strictly inexorable. They might have supposed that there were cases in which, as a sovereign, God might dispense with the rigid exactions of his violated law, and restore to his favor those who earnestly sued for his mercy. But when they see the redemption of our race accomplished by the death of our surety, the immaculate Son of God suffering in the room of sinners ; when they hear the dread commission go forth, "Awake, O ! sword, against my shepherd, against the man that is my fellow ;" when they behold the bleeding victim expiring in agony on the tree, in order that God might be just, and yet justify the guilty, they feel that the throne of heaven is established on principles as immutable as the sovereign who occupies it, and that the rights and honor of that throne must be maintained inviolable and unsullied.

They had contemplated Jehovah as a being possessed of *infinite wisdom*. They had gazed with astonishment upon the fabric of the universe, and admired the adaptation of all its parts to the accomplishment of the great purposes of its divine archi-

fect; but now is presented to their view such depths of divine wisdom, that though for centuries it has engaged their most profound research, its wonders still remain unexplored and uncomprehended.

They had already adored the displays of *divine power*. At the command of God, they had seen worlds instantly springing into existence, and the arm of rebels, raised against his throne, crushed and paralyzed, but in the work of redemption they witnessed "the exceeding greatness of His power," in creating the soul anew, rescuing it from the hands of the enemy, preserving it unharmed amid every exposure, and presenting it at last before the throne in all its original purity and felicity.

"'Twas great to speak a world from naught,
'Tis greater to redeem."

III. The work of redemption exhibits also the *harmony of the divine perfections*. None but the infinite mind could have devised a scheme by which sinners might be saved, and yet the glory of the divine nature remain untarnished. The exercise of one perfection, it would seem, must clash with another. How can God be just, and yet, at the same time, merciful? How can he be true, and yet remit the threatened penalty? How can he be holy, and yet receive into favor those upon whom he could not but look with the deepest abhorrence?

Angels were, no doubt, sensible of these difficulties. They had probably looked upon the condition of our race as hopeless. They could discover no method by which God could be honored, and yet man redeemed. Silence was in heaven, but soon the announcement is made that infinite wisdom has formed a plan for our recovery, a plan by which mercy is to prevail, and yet justice is to be honored, the penalty of the law is to be remitted, and yet its sacred authority maintained. Oh! what glories cluster around the cross! One attribute of Jehovah serves to illustrate and add new beauty to another. Justice honors mercy, and mercy, in return, honors justice. Instead of being displayed to each other's disparagement, they act in perfect harmony; and as they mingle their beams, they send forth such a flood of glory as utterly overwhelms the mind of the most exalted seraph, and causes the domains of heaven to ring with unceasing anthems of wonder and praise.

REMARKS.

1. *This subject may tend to throw light upon the nature of heaven's happiness.* It is not a happiness that flows from indolence, but from the *highest activity*. The powers of angels are exerted to their utmost in studying the divine perfections, while their bursting songs of praise continually give ex-

pression to their deep emotions of wonder, gratitude, and joy. Their happiness, however pure and elevated, is still *progressive*. The more they learn of God, the more ardent are their devotions, and the more exalted their felicity. Ever since they have had a being, they have, no doubt, been advancing in their moral character and condition; and to this improvement there can be no pause. The ages of eternity may yet make to them disclosures of which, at present, they have no conception, calling forth new and still more rapturous songs of rejoicing and praise. What, in this respect, is true of angels, is also true of the redeemed. There is but one being absolutely perfect. All creatures, whatever may be their present attainments, are still capable of progression. The Lamb is said to lead his people to "living fountains of waters," opening to them continually new sources of knowledge, holiness, and enjoyment. In the study of the divine character and works, there will be enough to employ the powers of the mind forever. When millions of ages have fled, the inhabitants of heaven may be but on the threshold of those magnificent displays of divine wisdom, power, and benevolence, which are to be progressively unfolded to their astonished and enraptured vision.

2. We may learn from this subject that *the scheme of redemption merits the profound investiga-*

tion of the most exalted intellects. Angels are “the flower of creation; they are always spoken of in scripture as proverbial for their knowledge; they are the first beings in the universe; and are as much above men in their powers as the heavens are higher than the earth.” And if there are things in the gospel into which even *they* desire to look, things which excite their astonishment and wonder, things the study of which adds to their knowledge and felicity, then, surely, the theme is one worthy the attention of the highest intellect on earth. There is no mind, however exalted, that will not be improved by this study, no heart that will not be made better, no state of enjoyment that will not be advanced. So absorbed was the great apostle in this stupendous theme, that he counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. His highest ambition was to “know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings.” Let no man, then, regard this study as unworthy of his attention. Of all sciences, the science of human redemption is the most grand and interesting. Compared with the knowledge of salvation, all other attainments are but trifles.

3. It may also be inferred from this subject, that *the existence of genuine piety is always connected with a deep interest in divine truth.* The piety of

angels is founded in truth. Their love to God is produced by a knowledge of his character; and the more they know of him, the more ardent and devoted is their affection. It is the same with the piety of God's redeemed people. They are born again by the "incorruptible seed of the word of God"—they are "sanctified by the truth." They grow in grace only when they grow in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The truths of the Gospel must therefore be peculiarly precious to them. "Oh, how I love thy holy law," said the Psalmist; "it is my meditation all the day." "How sweet are thy words to my taste; they are sweeter than honey to my mouth." It is characteristic of the wicked that they *forget God*. They are described as saying, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." "God is not in all their thoughts." But what says the believer? "Our desire is to thee, and the remembrance of thy name." "Show me, O God, thy glory."

4. We remark further,—*What an interesting part of the universe is that in which we now dwell.* In each of the countless worlds which God has called into being, there may be some peculiar manifestation of his glory. The grand attraction on our globe is the Cross. It is to this that angels

look for a display of the divine perfections nowhere else to be seen. Every step in the redemption of sinners is to them entirely new. The gift of Jesus Christ—the mystery of his incarnation—his miracles of power and grace—his unutterable agony—his ignominious death—his triumphant resurrection and ascension—the outpouring of his Spirit—the progress of his Gospel—the renovation of the heart—the conflicts of the believer—the supports which religion administers to him in the hour of affliction, of sickness, and death—his passage to glory—his slumber in the tomb—his joyful resurrection at the last day, and his complete redemption from all the evils of the apostacy, present to those adoring spirits scenes, not only new, but invested with the highest interest and wonder. The work of redemption which is going forward in our world, gives to this globe an importance which does not belong to any other portion of God's universe. There is no other world, so far as we know, on which such scenes are transacted as on this; and there is no world whose inhabitants should be more solemn and devout. Events are continually transpiring before us, calculated to awaken in us unutterable emotions. Immortal beings are forming their character for eternity. Some are thankfully accepting the provision of grace for their

redemption; others treating it with neglect and scorn. Some are sealing their destiny for heaven; others for hell. Each of us is taking a part in the solemn transactions which are here going forward. Not one of us can remain indifferent or unaffected. The preaching of the cross will either prove to us "the power of God unto salvation," or a "stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence;" either the grand influence to draw us to God and heaven, or the occasion of plunging us into lower depths of misery and ruin.

5. And this leads me to remark, finally,—*If the scheme of redemption engages the profound investigation of angels, then how deeply interesting should it be to men!* Upon this scheme is suspended our all. Take away the cross, and you remove the last, the only hope of a sinking world. The interest which angels feel in this subject arises, chiefly, from their desire to behold the manifestations of divine glory, or the benevolent regard they cherish for the welfare of man; but the interest which *we* have in this matter is more direct and serious. The blood of atonement was shed for *us*—the offer of salvation is made to *us*—the plan of redemption is one that contemplates *us*. How sacred, then, are the obligations we are under to a redeeming Saviour. What warm returns of gratitude ought we to render to him for his unmerited love. How

attentively should we study that system of grace upon which alone rests our hope of reconciliation and pardon; and how eager should we be at once to secure an interest in the precious blessings purchased by the blood of the cross, and pressed upon us with such melting importunity. Indifference to the Gospel betrays a state of moral blindness and perverseness which knows no parallel; and yet this indifference, so far from being a rare thing, is almost universal. What crowds may be seen, in every direction, rushing by the cross, as though it were utterly unworthy of a moment's attention. How difficult is it to interest men in the great truths of the Gospel. How few, like angels, may be found who are looking into the mysteries of redeeming mercy. Talk to men about trade—talk to them about politics—talk to them about the wonders of nature, and you may possibly secure their attention; but no sooner do you speak to them about redemption, than they appear eager to change the theme,—ashamed even to utter a name which should be their highest glory and joy.

If angels can be astonished at anything, they must be astonished at this. To see men busy about everything rather than the great interest of salvation, is, indeed, the wonder of wonders. Oh, how deeply depraved must be that heart which can remain unmoved amid the thrilling scenes of

the cross—which can treat with neglect a subject that engrosses the attention, and calls forth the songs of the loftiest intelligences of creation. How unlike are those who thus treat the great system of redemption to the pure and benevolent spirits of heaven. How unfit to be their companions, and how utterly disqualified to unite with them in their eternal anthem of praise to the once bleeding, but now exalted Lamb. If redemption be not your joy on earth, certain it is that it can never be your song in heaven. And are you, my dear hearer, prepared to forfeit all interest in the redemption of the Gospel? Shall Heaven again make to you the tender of salvation, and shall that salvation be neglected? What a scene for angels to witness! Here stands the unworthy ambassador of Jesus, beseeching you, in his stead, to become reconciled to God, and proclaiming to you a free and full pardon. “Surely,” every angel may well say, “such an offer cannot be slighted. Only let it be made known to those perishing sinners that God is waiting to be gracious, and every heart must instantly be drawn and melted by such kindness.” But no, no, the perverseness of the human heart is not so easily overcome. Men may be redeemed, but they *will not*. The groans of a dying Saviour awaken no emotion; and from the light of the cross, the light of the sanctuary, the light of

the sacred page, they urge their way downward to the darkness of eternal despair. Oh, be not so unwise, so rash, so infatuated. Let angels to-day witness one more evidence of the power of the Gospel, and Jesus rejoice in one more trophy of his all-conquering grace.

SERMON IV.

HUMAN DEPRAVITY.

God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.—GEN. vi. 5.

To know our disease is often one half the cure. “The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.” The general neglect of salvation may be attributed to the want of a proper conviction of its importance. No man will ever embrace Christ as a Saviour until he feels his need of him. Before he will seek to be saved, he must feel himself to be lost. The provisions of divine mercy are made only for the guilty and the perishing.

Men, in general, have no sense of the plague of their hearts. They have no conception either of the degree or the strength of their depravity. They think that this whole matter has been exaggerated. Ignorant of the purity of the divine character and law, they remain most profoundly ignorant of themselves. To be told that with all their seeming virtues, their fair exterior, they are still destitute of all moral goodness, and exposed

to the divine displeasure, they regard as both unjust and unkind. Were this representation made of the more depraved portion of the race, its truth might, perhaps, be admitted; but they see not how it can be applied to them, so upright, so charitable, so amiable.

Now, we have no disposition to overdraw the picture of human depravity. We wish to portray it just as it is portrayed in the word of God. To this we make our appeal. The great question to be decided is, In what light is the character of man regarded by his Maker? To this question our text furnishes us with an answer at once explicit and forcible. "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth," &c.

I. We may notice here, in the first place, the *seat* or *source* of human depravity—it is the *heart*—the prevailing affections, disposition, desires, and purposes of the soul. The sinfulness of man's conduct will hardly be contested, while the source from which it springs is commonly overlooked. Even the most aggravated crimes are often attributed more to weakness and inadvertence—to the violence of temptation, the force of habit, or the influence of example, than to any *inherent* corruption. Many who will readily acknowledge the sinfulness or irregularity of their lives, still flatter

themselves with the supposed goodness of their hearts. They maintain that they mean no harm, and that what are regarded as crimes are, after all, mere misfortunes or foibles.

This is certainly a most serious mistake. Depravity consists not in mere external actions, but in the intention of the mind. Our external conduct is holy or sinful no farther than it is connected with the heart—no more than are the movements of a watch, the revolution of the planets, the beating of the pulse, or the operations of any other unintelligent matter. If a man strike another and kill him, the crime consists not simply in the motion of the arm, but in the intention of the mind. If the act has no connection with the mind, or is entirely involuntary, it is divested of all moral character. There may be aggravated wickedness within, where it has never been developed in action, and where it may be covered over with deeds of apparent goodness. The Pharisees, though they made clean the outside of the cup and the platter, were full of all uncleanness. God takes cognizance of the inward man. He searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins of the children of men. The law demands not mere external obedience, but truth and purity within.

Now, we maintain that man is not only a sinner in conduct, but in heart. Not merely the streams

are corrupt, but the fountain also; not merely the fruit, but the tree—root, trunk, and branches. The disease is not merely external; it lies deeply seated within, affecting the very vitals.

On this point the Scriptures are explicit. “*Out of the heart* proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.” “The *heart* is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” “The *heart* of the sons of men is full of evil.”

Hence the necessity of an *internal* renovation. As our depravity is radical, so must our change be radical. It will not do merely to lop off the branches; we must strike at the very root. It will not do to cleanse the stream; we must purify the fountain. The remedy must reach to the very seat of the disease. “Wash thine heart from wickedness; how long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee?” “Cleanse your hands ye sinners, and purify your hearts ye double-minded.” “Make you a new heart and a new spirit.” “Create in me, O God, a clean heart, and renew within me a right spirit.”

II. Another important question bearing on this subject, relates to the *degree* or *extent* of human depravity.

The fact that man is a sinner is generally ad-

mitted. The evidences of this fact are too palpable to be gainsayed. There is a witness in every human bosom testifying that "we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God."

Readily, however, as men may admit their moral delinquencies, they have commonly but little idea of the *extent* of their sinfulness. If they confess that they do many things that are wrong, they still maintain that they do others which are right. They hope that their good deeds far overbalance their evil ones, and constitute for them a kind of satisfaction or atonement.

It is therefore an important question—*To what degree is man depraved?* Is his depravity partial or is it total? Fallen as he is, does he still possess some remains of moral goodness, or is he utterly void of true holiness?

If we rest the decision of this question on the testimony of the Scriptures, the evidence here is clear and abundant. They represent man as plunged into the deepest apostacy, the moral image of God as entirely effaced, and his moral nature in utter ruins. They represent him as destitute of all right affections towards God, and as under the complete dominion of selfishness. They not only condemn all his *actions* as sinful, but they exhibit his whole nature as corrupt, "alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them."

The language of the text is peculiarly forcible. "*God saw that the wickedness,*" &c. The *heart* is evil, the *imagination of the thoughts of the heart* is evil, *only* evil, and that not merely occasionally, but *continually*, or without any interruption.

What a fearful picture of human depravity! How could the doctrine of man's entire sinfulness be expressed in terms of greater clearness and strength?

With the testimony of the text accords the general testimony of the sacred page. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." "The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins."

But is this doctrine, so fully taught in the word of God, *confirmed by facts*? Is it in accordance with our actual experience and observation? Is it reasonable? Does it commend itself to the human understanding and conscience? Are there not many things connected with the character and conduct of man, previous to his renewal by divine grace, that militate against it? Do we not often discover in him a high sense of justice, generosity, kindness, gratitude, and other amiable qualities? Does he not also manifest a high appreciation of

the excellency of true religion, a marked respect for its institutions, and even sentiments of a highly devotional character? Does he not often speak of God with reverence, and express his admiration of the divine perfections and works? And how can all this be reconciled with the idea that he is totally depraved? With all these apparent virtues the doctrine which we are maintaining is entirely consistent. When we speak of man as totally depraved, we mean simply that he is *destitute of all holiness*. We do not divest him of the essential faculties of human nature; we do not deprive him of conscience or a moral sense; we do not represent him as void of natural affection; we do not even assert that he is as bad as he can be; for depravity, like holiness, admits of continual progression: but we maintain that he has no conformity to God's law, that he renders no such obedience as that law demands.

Now, it is evident, that all the amiable traits to which we have referred, may exist where there is no regard to the claims of that law whatever; where there is even open and decided hostility to its authority. Nothing is more common than for men to manifest a high respect for the rights of each other, while they are utterly indifferent to the rights of God—nothing more common than for them even to manifest a sentimentalism, bearing a

strong resemblance to the exercises of true piety, while the heart remains fixed in its opposition to God and holiness. Many of the most virtuous and amiable persons, are the most bitter enemies to the Cross of Christ. Many a man who has spoken in the most exalted terms of the majesty, wisdom and goodness of God, has yet shown himself to be in a state of entire alienation from his holy character and law. It is related of a lecturer on philosophy, that in discoursing on the divine attributes, as displayed in the immensity of creation, he, with the audience, was wrought up into a rapture of apparent devotion, and yet in less than an hour's time, after leaving the room, he was heard to curse and swear, as was his usual manner of conversation.

Napoleon Bonaparte once remarked, that while walking alone one evening, the sound of a church bell fell upon his ear. Finding him in a genial mood, it seems to have awakened in his breast the most touching recollections of his childhood, and filled his soul with devotional feeling. "I was profoundly affected," says he, "such is the power of early habit and associations; and I considered that if such was the case with me, what must not be the effect of such recollections upon the more simple and credulous vulgar. Let your philosophers answer that. *The people must have a religion.*"

Nothing, then, that may attach itself to the character of an unregenerate man, is inconsistent with the fact of his entire estrangement from God. Not a single desire of his heart; not a single purpose of his mind; not a single action of his life, when closely analyzed, will be found to bear any conformity to the requisitions of the divine law. With all his external adornments; with all his sweetness and amiability of temper; with all his deeds of charity and devotion, his supreme affections are placed, not on God, but on self.

The change, therefore, which he must undergo to fit him for heaven, must not only be radical, *but thorough and entire*. If man is not depraved, then, of course, he needs no spiritual renovation. If his depravity is merely external, then he needs only an external reformation. If his sinfulness be only partial, then he needs only a partial change; but if, as has been shown, the corruption reaches the heart, and affects his whole moral nature, then nothing short of a spiritual regeneration, a new creation, can ever restore him to holiness and happiness. "Marvel not," said Jesus, "that I said unto thee, ye must be born again." The change is as reasonable as it is important. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit." As by the first birth man is wholly sinful, so it is only by a second birth that he can become the subject of true holiness.

III. Our text exhibits also the *universality* of human depravity.

Admitting that what has been affirmed of the sinfulness of man is true of some, is it true of *all*? If such was the character of the antediluvians; if such is the character of the heathen, is it also the character of men in christian countries? May not human nature, once so deteriorated, have undergone some improvement? May not the increased light which has been thrown upon the mind, the more powerful restraints which are exerted against sin, and the advanced state of society, have greatly modified the workings of human depravity, and elevated man to a moral dignity unknown in the ages of darkness and superstition?

To this we reply: human nature is essentially the same in all ages, and in all countries. The depravity of the heart may be restrained, or, rather, be developed in new forms; but in its great principles, its leading elements, it is always and everywhere the same. "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man."

Our text makes no exception. "God saw that the wickedness of *man* was great." The term is generic, including the entire race. It describes not simply antediluvian wickedness, but human wickedness in general. The character of man remained the same *after* the flood that it was before; hence we find substantially the same record made

in the eighth chapter of Genesis that is made in the sixth. "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." The moral portrait here drawn by the pen of inspiration, is just as true a representation of fallen humanity now as it was formerly.

Many centuries after this, the inspired writers bore a similar testimony to the corruption of human nature. "The heart of the sons of men," says Solomon, "is full of evil." "Who," says Job, "can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? What is man that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?" "What, then," asks the Apostle, "are we better than they?" Are the Jews with all their light and privileges, and external sanctity, any better than the Gentiles? "No, in no wise; for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin. As it is written; there is none righteous, no not one."

The Scriptures, indeed, speak of a class of persons whose character differs essentially from that of all others; a class designated as *holy, godly, righteous*. This difference, however, is represented, not as the fruit of nature, but of grace. They are said to be "created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works;" born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

“For we ourselves also were sometime foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God, our Saviour, toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.”

Previous to regeneration, then, the hearts of all men are fashioned alike. They may differ in their conduct; they may differ in their natural dispositions and temperaments; they may differ in the degree of their guilt and sinfulness, but there is no more holiness in one heart than there is in another.

You may be a man of unblemished life, and may never have debased yourself by those indulgences which degrade the character of others. You may be a kind husband, an affectionate father, a useful citizen, upright in your dealings, humane in your disposition, liberal in your charities, and yet, if you have never been born of the Spirit of God, your best deeds are radically defective, and your soul is dyed with a moral pollution that must utterly unfit you for all communion with infinite purity.

You may be a lady of the highest refinement

and accomplishments, a faithful wife, a devoted mother, an affectionate daughter and sister. Your temper may be the most amiable, your manners the most kind and courteous, and your whole demeanor such as may commend you to the respect and admiration of all around you; and yet, if you have never been renewed by divine grace, and come as an humble penitent to the feet of your Saviour, you are still an enemy to his cross, and burdened with guilt that must at last sink you down to the very depths of woe and despair.

You may be a young man in whose mind the principles of virtue have been early instilled, and, like one of whom we read in the Gospel, you may be ready to say that you have kept all the commandments from your youth up, and yet, with all your regularity of conduct, you may have violated every precept of the divine law, cherished the spirit of rebellion against the throne of heaven, and possess a heart stained with aggravated guilt.

We wish to do injustice to none. Most cordially do we give our fellow-men credit for all that they deserve; and ascribe to them all that they properly possess; but the virtues that attach themselves to our fallen humanity are not holiness. The apostacy of man is just as entire as that of fallen angels. There is no more holiness in the one than there is in the other.

Let it then be distinctly understood, that the Bible, in preferring the charge of total corruption, prefers it against unrenewed men, *without a solitary exception*. And as all have sinned, all, consequently, need to be regenerated. The change is just as necessary in one case as in another—just as necessary for the Jew as for the Gentile, for men in Christian as in Pagan lands, for the moral as for the vicious, for the man of correct sentiments, or orthodox creed, as for the infidel and errorist. The language of the Saviour is general. “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” There is no exception to this rule; and if any think they are too virtuous or too good to need such a change, it only affords us melancholy evidence how seriously they have mistaken their character, and how insensible they are to their spiritual condition.

IV. We notice now, in the last place, *the truth of the doctrine before us*. This is established not merely by the testimony of man, but by the testimony of God. “*God*,” it is said, “saw that the wickedness of man was great.” In the 14th Psalm, we read, “The *Lord* looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God. They are all gone aside; they are altogether be-

come filthy ; there is none that doeth good, no not one."

This puts the matter beyond all dispute. Were the humiliating view of human depravity which we have presented, the offspring of some misguided zealot—some gloomy misanthropist, it might admit of controversy ; but the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it, and who will gainsay ? The testimony should be regarded as decisive. There can be no mistake in that testimony. God sees as man cannot see. "Man looketh on the outward appearance ; but God looketh on the heart." His eye penetrates into the inmost recesses of the soul ; he weighs the spirits of men, and tries all their actions by the unerring standard of truth and rectitude. The result of his inspection is, that "there is none that doeth good, no not one." This is *his* sentence. He can have no possible motive to deceive us. He is the God of eternal truth. He knows what constitutes sin, and he knows, too, to what extent we have sinned. If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful. The great question to be decided is not, what estimate do *we* form of our character, but how is that character estimated by him who searches our hearts, and who is to be our final Judge. The verdict which he has brought in against us is, that we have "all sinned and come short of his glory ;" and it is in view of this fact,

that he has provided for us a Saviour. Christ *died* for *all*, because all were dead. If man is not fallen, then he needs no redemption. The Scriptures reveal to us a common Saviour, because we are involved in a common ruin.

The subject before us is one of immeasurable importance. I wish to impress upon the mind of each one of my unconverted hearers his exceeding sinfulness. We would not charge you wrongfully. We will take it for granted that you possess all the excellences that can attach themselves to our fallen nature; still, as one appointed to watch for your souls, and who must ere long give account to God, you must permit me to tell you, that you rest under a mountain-weight of guilt, which, if not removed, must eventually crush you to interminable ruin. We bring against you no railing accusation. We ascribe to you no character which we did not once possess ourselves. We pass no sentence upon your state which we do not pass upon our own. By nature we were all the children of wrath, even as others—partakers of the same depravity, and exposed to the same condemnation; and if we have been made to differ from what we once were, the praise is due, not to ourselves, but to sovereign grace alone. “God who is rich in mercy, for his great love, wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.”

“Dark—dark was the tempest without—
Keen—keen was the torture within;
By the terrors of hell I was compassed about—
I felt them already begin;
Despair was advancing to gnaw
The spring of my spirit away—
Each to my sight placed the curse of the law,
And my sins in their dreadful array;
Fear shook me—astonishment sat on my eye,
While conscience extorted the heart-rending sigh.
When, lo! in that moment of fear,
Broke mildly, Hope’s tremulous cry;
The accents of Mercy fell soft on my ear,
And thus seemed the seraph to say:
‘Look—look to thy crucified Lord!
See where he lies bleeding for thee!
Hark! Come, I will save thee! Believe on his word;
Flee—flee to the Refuge—oh, flee!’
I heard, I obeyed—for his love drew me on—
I clung to his cross—and my terrors were gone.”

Oh, that the same grace that has wrought such wonders in us, may now display its power in you! We desire that you may have the same sense of your sinfulness, only that you may be the recipients of the same pardon and cleansing. If we represent your disease to be malignant, we, at the same time, bring to you an effectual remedy. Painful indeed may be to you the discovery of your spiritual malady; but to close your eyes against it, is as unreasonable as it is ruinous. The malady is there, whether you are conscious of it or not; and if not speedily removed, by the appli-

cation of the balm of Gilead,—heaven's sovereign antidote,—it must terminate in all the horrors of the second death.

During the ravages of the plague in London, “in a princely mansion, around the evening fire-side, sat a family group that embraced the father, mother, and an only daughter, just ripening into womanhood, from the bloom and beauty of youth. They had been speaking of the plague, and their gratitude was given to Him who had them in his keeping, that *as yet* the destroyer had not entered their circle. At that moment the father's eye rested on his daughter's beautiful cheek, and he cried as if he had been pierced with a spear, ‘My daughter, the plague spot! Oh! my daughter!’

“She assured him that he must be mistaken; that she felt better than she had ever felt in her life before; and as she passed her arms around his neck, and kissed his lips, he recoiled as if from a serpent that he loathed. She went to the mirror, and looked in, that she might see for herself, what had so alarmed her anxious parent, but she could see nothing, and again she begged him to dismiss his fears. But no,—it was there. She took the lamp in her hand, and walked to the glass, and as the light fell on her face, it revealed with awful clearness the fatal truth, and turning to her father, she fell into his arms, exclaiming, ‘*I am dead, my father; I am dead!*’”

My dear hearer, the plague-spot of sin is on your soul! You see it not, but it is there; and could you but be persuaded to look for one moment into the mirror of God's eternal law, the fearful fact would at once disclose itself to your view. Oh, that the light of Heaven may now shine upon your benighted mind, reveal to you your condition as a sinner, and, at the same time, your only help in Christ. Turn not away from the disclosure, unwelcome as it may be. If *you* do not see your danger, others do, and in kindness apprise you of it. Attempt no longer to conceal or to deny your guilt. Know your misery, and flee at once to the fountain of cleansing. Bad as your condition already is, it is growing worse and worse. No time is to be lost. The dreadful malady is at work in your system, and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death. Nothing but the blood of Jesus can reach your case. Now, then, look to him and live. Accept with gratitude the proffered remedy, and adore the grace of your great Deliverer.

SERMON V.

THE FOUNTAIN OPENED, OR HEAVEN'S ANTIDOTE FOR SIN.

In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.—
ZECHARIAH xiii. 1.

THAT man is a fallen being, depraved and guilty, is a fact that can admit of no question. Aside from the testimony of the Bible, the history of our race, the state of society, and our individual consciousness furnish an array of evidence on this subject that can neither be overlooked nor ignored. In all ages of the world, the degeneracy of human nature has been acknowledged and deplored. Statesmen, philosophers, poets, have all admitted the evil, while they could furnish no adequate remedy for its removal.

The very existence of human laws, implies that man is a selfish being, and that his passions need to be kept under restraint. Visit what portions of the earth you please, civilized or savage, and you every where meet with the developments of human depravity. Both in Christian and in heathen lands, the heart is found to be essentially the same,

“deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.”

The history of our world is a history of wrongs, a history of crimes. And then, if we turn our eyes within, and carefully inspect the operation of our own minds, who will not discover evidences of a nature fallen and ruined; a nature averse to all good, and inclined to all evil? There is no man truly candid and honest, who must not be ready to pass sentence upon himself, as well as upon the world around him. “Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?” “All have gone aside; they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no not one.”

It would, however, be of little advantage to know our disease unless at the same time, we were directed to an adequate remedy, to be conscious of our sinfulness, and yet ignorant of the means by which sin may be removed. As individuals and as a race, it must be admitted that we need some influence by which the corruption of our nature may be eradicated, and man may be restored to his forfeited purity and happiness. But here the great question meets us. Where is that influence to be found? Where is the appropriate remedy for sin? What agency can raise our fallen humanity from its deep and woeful degradation, and restore our world to moral order and harmony?

Various expedients have been proposed to accomplish this desirable end, some of which we shall now briefly notice, and then, after showing their utter insufficiency, direct your attention to heaven's grand and sovereign remedy.

I. One means which is relied on, for the cure of human depravity is *intelligence, or the general diffusion of knowledge*. By many this is regarded as the grand catholicon for the restoration of diseased humanity. The public mind seems every where to be waking up to the importance of education, and men are now as loud in their plaudits of knowledge as they were formerly in descanting upon its supposed evils. The press is pouring forth its cheap literature; lecturers on various scientific subjects are traversing the length and breadth of the land, furnishing the people information in the most popular and attractive style; schools of every order are opened for the education of the children of the rich and the poor.

Now, all this is as it should be. Christianity has nothing to fear from the cultivation of the human intellect, or the discoveries of human science. Instead of discountenancing the efforts which are made to enlighten and improve the mind, she lends to them her cordial sanction and co-operation. But if any suppose that the mere dissemination of knowledge can effect the regeneration of our world, they

are certainly laboring under a most serious delusion, and are destined to certain disappointment. The cultivation of the intellect is not the cultivation of the heart. There is no necessary connection between the two. The utmost that knowledge can do is, to restrain or modify human corruption, and even for this it is often found utterly inadequate. Knowledge is power to do evil as well as to do good. Many of our most accomplished villains have been our most accomplished scholars. Countries and ages distinguished for science, have been equally distinguished for voluptuousness and crime. Egypt, the cradle of science, and Greece its temple, were sunk to the very lowest depths of human corruption, thus demonstrating the utter inefficacy of mere knowledge to cure the moral plague of the heart.

II. Upon what, then, shall we depend as an adequate remedy for the corruption of human nature? Upon *law*?

This, indeed, may have its effect. It is an influence that cannot be dispensed with. Bad as the world is, it would be infinitely worse, were it not for the restraints imposed by the arm of civil power. Tear down our prisons, abolish our legal statutes, and afford each one full license to act out the impulses of his own nature, and the race of men would soon be converted into a race of devils.

Neither property, nor reputation, nor life would, for a moment remain secure. The prosperity of one would be the depression of another, and all sense of justice and humanity would be overpowered by the dominion of human selfishness and passion.

And yet all that the best form of government can accomplish is, simply to keep the raging elements of human corruption within certain bounds. It cannot reach the source of evil. While it may check certain forms of depravity, it takes no cognizance of others, and the man who sustains a reputable standing in the eye of the community, may, notwithstanding, be void of love both to his Maker and to his fellow-beings.

Even *divine legislation* has been found wholly ineffectual to control the corruptions of our fallen nature. The law of God, though promulgated amid scenes of surpassing sublimity and terror, is still set at defiance. The very people who one day tremble at the scene, are the next seen in arms against the throne of heaven. What dependence, then, can be placed upon mere *human legislation*?

III. Equally ineffectual are *all the maxims of human philosophy* to cleanse man from his moral defilement. The experiment has been fairly made, and it has proved a manifest failure. Many of the Pagan philosophers acknowledged that human na-

ture was strangely degenerate, but they neither understood the origin of the disease, nor its proper remedy. Their systems of morality were entirely defective and powerless. Vice was often confounded with virtue, and the most flagitious crimes were sanctioned both by precept and example.

And if they could not govern themselves, what influence could it be expected that their best maxims would exert upon others? Indeed so ineffectual did they find all their efforts to reform society, that they confessed there was no prospect of any material improvement, without some new revelation from God to man. "You may resign," says Socrates, "all hope of reforming the manners of men, unless it please God to send some person to instruct you." "Whatever is set right," says Plato, "in the present ill state of the world, can be done only by the interposition of God."

Modern infidel philosophy can boast of no higher achievements. If it possesses any additional light, it is indebted for it to that very revelation which it discards, and which it affects to despise. Truly "the world by wisdom knew not God."

IV. We may next notice, as another pretended remedy for human corruption, *the various forms of socialism*. However diversified may be these forms, they all agree in attributing moral evil not

to any inherent depravity, but to a defective organization of society. "Evil," it is said, "is always superficial, and of its very nature, therefore, perishable or transitive. It is unknown at the heart of things; and when, therefore, the heart of things become fully operative at the extremities, or when the centre governs the circumference, it will utterly die out of remembrance."

The remedy which these reformers accordingly suggest, is the entire reconstruction of human society, so that all men shall be brought to an equality and form one fraternity. Property must be equally distributed; the poor must be raised to a level with the rich; the family relation must be abolished, and all religious institutions set aside, as no longer adapted to the superior illumination of the present century.

Misguided men! how little do they understand either the causes or the remedy of human corruption. How utterly abortive have proved all the efforts which they have yet made to reform the world. In all the associations which have been formed to carry out their boasted plans, there has been only defeat and disappointment.

The foundation of the various forms of socialism is nothing but a modified species of infidelity. Ignorant of the deep depravity of the human heart, and of the power of the Gospel to purify it, men are vainly attempting to "gather grapes

of thorns, and figs of thistles.” Instead of stemming the tide of human corruption, they are only giving to it additional force. Instead of making our world what they propose—a second heaven—they would, were their principles fully developed, turn it into a second hell.

V. Alike impotent are *all human associations for moral reform, unaccompanied by the sanctifying influence of the Gospel*. Such associations, baptized with the spirit of Christianity, may, indeed, do much towards the correction of existing evils. The temperance enterprise, for example, has evidently stamped upon it the seal of Heaven; and both as a means of preventing drunkenness, and of reforming the inebriate, has already accomplished wonders. The moral influence of temperance societies, and other kindred associations, must, however, depend mainly upon their close alliance with evangelical truth, accompanied by earnest prayer for the divine blessing. To reason effectually of “*temperance*,” we must also reason of “*righteousness and judgment to come*.” The truth must be brought to bear upon the conscience, and in our efforts to turn men from particular forms of vice, we must labor to destroy the very root of evil, by renewing the disposition and motives of the heart. A mere external reformation may make a man appear different in the eyes of

the world, but it cannot alter his standing before God. Man is corrupt within as well as without. Nothing, therefore, short of a spiritual renovation—a new creation, can ever eradicate the principle of evil and restore him to fellowship with infinite purity.

All attempts either to promote the moral improvement of ourselves or of others, while we discard the necessity of a new birth, are founded upon utter ignorance of human depravity, and must meet with inevitable defeat.

The experience of Dr. Chalmers, of Scotland, affords a most instructive lesson on this point. How fruitless was the experiment which he made during a long period of his ministry, to effect the reformation of his parishioners, by inculcating simply the principles of morality. Notwithstanding the vehemence with which he urged the virtues and proprieties of social life, it had not, he tells us, “the weight of a feather” upon the moral habits of his parishioners. “And it was not,” he further states, “until I got impressed with the utter alienation of the heart in all its desires and affections from God; it was not till the free offer of forgiveness, through the blood of Christ, was urged upon their acceptance, that I ever heard of any of those subordinate reformations, which I aforetime made the earnest and the zealous, but I

am afraid, at the same time, the ultimate object of my earlier ministrations. I have at last learnt that to preach Christ is the only effective way of preaching morality in all its branches."

Equally ineffectual did he find the influence of moral principles to overcome the power of sin in himself. There was a time, even after he had entered the Christian ministry, when he "nauseated and despised God's mode of justifying men freely by faith in Christ," and when he vainly supposed that "the rewards of heaven are attached to the exercise of our virtuous affections," irrespective of the satisfaction made to violated justice by the atonement of the Saviour. In the course of time he was visited successively by several afflictive providences. Hard, indeed, did he now strive to attain to that pure standard of morality which he had proposed as the perfection of human nature; but every struggle was attended only with mortifying defeat. The more he contemplated the purity of God's law, the more he became convinced of the entire defect of his own righteousness, and of the strength of his own depravity. At length the great doctrine of the atonement opened itself to his mind with all its wonders. Here he discovered just what he needed, and what he had in vain sought from every other source—not only peace to his troubled conscience, but

power over sin. He now loved the cross just as much as he had before despised it. While he made it the centre of all his own hopes, it ever constituted the grand theme of his preaching, and his sole dependence in every effort to win men to God and heaven.

VI. I may further remark—*No reliance can be placed on the observance of any religious rites, whether of human or divine appointment*, as containing any inherent efficacy to cleanse man from sin. In all ages of the world there has been a tendency to depend on such rites, exclusive of the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit. This was the great sin of the Jews—a sin, however, too common even amid all the light of the present dispensation. Not only the deluded Romanist, but numbers who are included in the ranks of Protestantism, know no other religion than that of form and ceremony. The religion of *sacramentarianism*, as it has been designated, constitutes one of the leading and most dangerous heresies of the day—a religion which, however much it may accord with the natural pride and self-righteousness of the human heart, still leaves the dominion of sin unbroken. It cleanses the outside of the cup and the platter, while within there is nothing but uncleanness. Men talk of *baptismal regeneration*, of *baptismal grace*, but let them furnish us with proof that all

those who are washed with water are also renewed by the Holy Ghost. Let them prove, too, that all who receive the bread and the wine in the Holy Supper, are actually partakers of Christ and his benefits. What wretched delusion thus to mistake the shadow for the substance, the sign for the thing signified. What contemptible quackery thus to "heal the hurt slightly, crying peace, peace, when there is no peace."

"No outward forms can make me clean,
The leprosy lies deep within."

Is there then no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Must sin ever retain its dominion over the human mind? Must our world ever remain what it now is, the scene of pollution and guilt? Listen again to the glad announcement in the text, "*In that day,*" — the day of which the prophet had just spoken, — the times of the Messiah, "*In that day, there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem,*" to both rulers and people, "*for sin and for uncleanness.*"

To what but the atoning blood, in connection with the sanctifying grace of Christ, can these words point? Here is the only hope of our lost and ruined world—the only influence by which it can be brought back to holiness and happiness.

“The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.” “He gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

Not a soul has ever been recovered from the defilement of sin, but in this all-cleansing fountain. The redeemed in glory all “washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” “Ye are washed,” said Paul, to the once idolatrous and voluptuous Corinthians, “Ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”

The system of redemption, revealed in the gospel, is one that exactly meets our case. While it delivers us from the penalty of sin, it also delivers us from its reigning power. It reaches the very fountain of human corruption. It not only reforms; it also regenerates. While it regulates the conduct, it also purifies the heart. It changes the life by changing our principles of action. It binds us in love to our fellow-men, by first binding us in love to God. It saves us not merely from the practice of sin, but from the love of sin. In its warfare with evil, it is wholly uncompromising. It denounces it in every form and in every degree. It spares it neither in thought, nor word, nor deed. It requires us to be holy even as God is holy, to walk even as Christ walked.

And while it lays upon us such high and sacred obligations, *it also affords us the grace necessary for compliance.* It furnishes us with motives the most rousing, and promises the most cheering. Instead of being left to our own weakness, we are “strengthened with all might.” The grace of Christ, which quickened us when we were dead in trespasses and in sins, also upholds us in our spiritual existence. Thus we advance from one stage of our new life to another, until we “stand complete in all the will of God,” and are ultimately presented before the throne “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.”

This is not mere theory. Facts in abundance are before us, affording the fullest demonstration that the gospel can do for man all that it claims to do — that it is truly “the power of God to salvation.” How many living witnesses might we adduce to attest its efficacy. The slaves of sin have been made free in Christ. What other agency has ever effected such a transformation in human character, and in human society? Partial as has hitherto been the influence of the gospel, it has done for our world what all other influences combined could not effect. Who cannot discern the marked difference between heathen and christian countries, in everything that tends to enlighten, elevate, and bless our race? What wonderful tri-

umphs did the gospel achieve when it was first promulgated. Ignorance, superstition, impurity, all vanished before it; the fetters of iniquity were broken, and ransomed thousands exulted in the liberty wherewith Christ made them free.

And wherever "the truth as it is in Jesus" is proclaimed, at the present day, there may be witnessed the same glorious results. Nations once enveloped in the grossest moral darkness, and sunk to the very lowest level of humanity, have, under the preaching of the cross, emerged into light, liberty and joy. But a few years since, the Sandwich Islands contained a population that might be truly represented as in the very region of the shadow of death; now their secular and moral condition is scarcely inferior to that of our own favored country.

The purifying efficacy of the gospel is attested by facts—facts which meet us at every turn. The history of nations, and the history of individuals; every revival of pure religion, and every instance of true conversion, proclaim to us the wonderful adaptation of Heaven's appointed means to reclaim a lost and helpless race.

"This remedy did wisdom find,
To heal diseases of the mind;
This sovereign balm whose virtues can,
Restore the ruined creature man."

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

REMARKS.

1. Let this subject *impress us with the importance of sustaining religious institutions*. There are those who regard all the money expended in this cause as a dead loss. "For what purpose," say they, "is this waste?" Little do such men know how to appreciate the influence of the gospel either upon individual or upon national prosperity. What but the gospel has made us, as a people, what we are? And what but the same gospel can perpetuate our exalted privileges? Let us suppose that for a single century every Christian temple were closed, the Sabbath abolished, the sacred Scriptures banished, and the voice of the preacher hushed, who could describe the scene of moral desolation and ruin that would spread over the wide extent of our land? Everywhere the flood-gates of vice would be opened—the monster, intemperance, would stalk abroad unresisted, carrying forward his work of death and perdition—human rights would be invaded—prisons and penitentiaries would be multiplied, and the days of our national prosperity numbered, and known only in the history of the past.

Religious institutions are worth infinitely more than they cost. The money contributed for their

support and extension, affords the safest and most profitable investment. Religion must ever be the ground of our national prosperity, if not of our national existence. Well did the father of our country understand this when he said, "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports." "And," continues he, "let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education, or minds of a peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle."

2. *What a powerful motive does this subject furnish to extend the influence of Christianity over our entire earth.* The religion of the gospel is adapted for the *world*, and is designed for the world. Its provisions are made for the world, and its blessings are to be tendered to the world. It is a religion as much suited for one country as for another; for one class of society as for another—the only religion that can reclaim a wandering race to God and holiness. Everything else has been demonstrated to be utterly ineffectual. This is *heaven's* antidote for the woes of our fallen humanity. Wherever this comes, it comes as an angel of mercy; and if

it has already accomplished such wonders, limited as has been its extent, what may we not hope to realize when it spreads its wings over the entire earth. Then the darkness of ages shall vanish, the noise of war be hushed, the chains of oppression broken, the raging passions of man curbed, and purity, harmony and joy, take up their abode in every land, in every dwelling, and in every heart. When, oh, when shall that happy era dawn! When shall the gospel, with its message of love, speed its flight over every continent and every island, over every sea and every land, over every mountain and every valley, until the shout echoes and re-echoes "like the sound of many waters." "It is done! Hallelujah! The Lord God omnipotent reigneth! The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ!"

3. I must now add: *Let us, as individuals, repair to the fountain of cleansing.* It is thus only that it can be rendered effectual. That fountain has been opened for you, for me, for all. There is no man who has any knowledge of himself that must not feel the necessity of a spiritual renovation. "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." And what can remove the deep and dismal stain, save the blood of atonement? No tears of penitence—no baptismal water

— no purgatorial fires — nothing, nothing but the blood of the Lamb.

“There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.”

That blood is as efficacious now as it ever was. It has already availed for thousands, and it can avail for you. The fountain is still open and accessible. Oh, that you now may prove its efficacy. Come with all your guilt and defilement. Come ye self-righteous moralists. Come ye cold and barren professors. Come ye prodigals, ye chief of sinners, come. “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” “If I wash thee not,” says Jesus, “thou hast no part with me;” no part with him in his kingdom of grace here, nor in his kingdom of glory hereafter. There is no salvation from misery but in salvation from sin. Not a soul will enter heaven unless washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. The pure in heart alone shall see God, and there can be no moral purity in sinners, but in a moral cleansing; and remember, the blood of Jesus alone cleanseth from all sin.

SERMON VI.

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE CROSS.

And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.—
JOHN xii. 32.

MAN is a wanderer from God. The essence of our apostacy consists in withdrawing our affections from the Creator, and centering them in the creature. “All we,” says the prophet, “like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way.” Our entire race has thrown off its allegiance to the throne of heaven, and set up an interest altogether separate and hostile.

Man, left to himself, will continue this revolt forever. Instead of returning to the path of rectitude, he wanders still farther from it, until he wanders into the blackness of eternal remorse and despair. “No man,” says Jesus, “can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me, *draw* him.” He has no disposition to give up his wanderings, and seek the divine favor. His purpose is only to do evil, and all his moral perceptions have become blinded and perverted.

Never will he be restored from this deep and deplorable apostacy, without the interposition of grace. In God alone is his help; and in our text we are referred to the grand means which infinite benevolence and wisdom have appointed to bring back an alienated race to God and holiness. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." The reference here is, to the Saviour's crucifixion; for it is immediately added, "This he spake signifying what death he should die." Thus, "as the serpent was lifted up in the wilderness, even so must the son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life."

The *drawing* of which Christ speaks in the text, is evidently not a *physical* but a *moral* drawing; not the drawing of force or coercion, but of argument and persuasion; not that kind of drawing by which the planets are moved in their orbits, or a stone thrown into the air, falls by the power of gravitation to the earth, but a drawing adapted to men as creatures of intellect, will, conscience, and heart. They are drawn, not in opposition to their wills, but with their cordial concurrence; drawn in perfect accordance with the constitution of the mind, and by influences which the sinner feels no disposition to resist; drawn just as the affectionate child is drawn in love, and prompt obedience to the parent; just as the object of your charities is

drawn to acknowledge with heart-felt gratitude, the kindness of his benefactor; just as the wounded Israelites were drawn to look to the divinely appointed method of healing; just as the patient is drawn in anxious solicitude and fond expectation towards his attending physician; just as the drowning man is drawn to seize the rope extended for his rescue; just as many of you, we trust, have been drawn to-day to the sanctuary of God, and as you are daily drawn to your closets for meditation and prayer. "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love." "Draw me," said the spouse, "and I will run after thee."

The subject of our present discourse will be the *attractive power of the cross*. There is every thing in the great fact of a Saviour's crucifixion, and the atonement which was made by it, calculated to draw the heart of man to God and to holiness.

I. Contemplate the *dignity and excellency of Calvary's victim*. Who is it that writhes in agony on yonder tree? Who is it that the world has thus rejected, persecuted, and slain? What evil has he done? For what crime does he suffer? Strange to tell, this is no other than the "brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person."—"The lamb without blemish and without spot." Treated, though he is as guilty, his char-

acter is immaculate; "he knew no sin." Even his enemies could "find no fault in him." In him centred every conceivable excellence; he is "altogether lovely," worthy of the love, confidence, and imitation of every child of man. Blind indeed must be the mind; perverse indeed must be the heart that can discern nothing in a character like this to admire and adore. Here human nature is exhibited in its highest moral perfection; here is one who has afforded an exemplification of all that is true, of all that is just, of all that is amiable, of all that man was before his sad defection, and of all that man is destined to be when fully restored by the power of divine grace. If there is any thing in moral excellence that can awaken esteem, with what emotions should we contemplate a character so exalted, and so unsullied.

But in the victim of the cross, we have not only *humanity* in all its perfection; we have also *divinity* in all its glory. "In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Veiled as were for a season the glories of the divine nature, it was that nature which constituted the altar on which the atoning sacrifice was offered, and which imparted to it its peculiar virtue. Though the manhood of Christ alone could suffer, it was his divinity which enabled him to sustain his sufferings, and which stamped them with infinite merit. What a wonderful personage, then, is this! God and man,—the

Creator and the creature,--strength and feebleness,--heaven and earth united in one! "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." The Lord of glory dies for man. He leaves, as it were, for a season, his throne of majesty; he lays aside his robes of royalty, and flies to the rescue of a guilty and ruined race. What wonders, then, centre in the cross. What ineffable glory beams from that face that was once marred with tears, and with blood. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father he hath declared him."

II. The *mercy* displayed in the cross, invests it with a power to subdue the obduracy of the human heart.

What but mercy could ever have prompted the offended majesty of heaven to devise, and carry into execution the wondrous scheme of human redemption? As fallen beings, our condition was as hopeless as it was wretched, our doom as just as it was terrible. The violated law demanded our death; and if the penalty of that law is remitted, it must be by an act of grace alone. We deserved no relief, we *asked* for none. No petition was sent up to heaven for mercy; no disposition was manifested to return to our allegiance. To our rebellion we had added the most obstinate perverseness, and we had only to be left to our own waywardness to complete and to seal our ruin.

“Attend, ye heavens ! ye heaven of heavens attend,
Attend, and wonder ! wonder ever more !
When man had fallen, rebelled, insulted God ;
Was most polluted, yet most madly proud ;
Indebted infinitely ; yet most poor ;
Captive to sin, yet unwilling to be bound ;
To God’s incensed justice, and hot wrath
Exposed ; due victim of eternal death,
And utter woe—harp lift thy voice on high !
Ye everlasting hills ! ye angels bow !
Bow ye redeemed of men ! God was made flesh,
And dwelt with man on earth ! the Son of God,
Only begotten, and well beloved, between
Men and his Father’s justice interposed ;
Put human nature on ; His wrath sustained,
And in their name, suffered, obeyed, and died,
Making his soul an offering for sin.”

Pollock.

Now, if there is any thing in kindness calculated to melt, to subdue, to win the heart, what amazing power must there be in the cross to move even the marble heart of man. Who can think of the pity of our God, the sacrifice which has been made for our redemption, the voluntary obedience and sufferings of “the friend of sinners,” his poverty and shame, his tears and blood, and all this for his bitterest foes, and yet hold out in determined hostility. If you defy Jehovah’s thunders, surely you cannot trifle with his love. Where is the man who does not feel the power of this motive ? Where the individual in this assembly who has not, at times, been melted by the story of the

cross ? True, you may stifle the feeling awakened in your bosom ; you may speedily wipe away the tear that falls unbidden from your eye, and may soon assume your accustomed firmness and insensibility ; yet remain unmoved you cannot. The rock will be smitten ; the waters will gush ; and it is only by a most desperate effort that you have resisted the appeal which the cross thus makes to all the generous impulses of your nature.

III. The tendency of the cross to draw men to God will further appear, when we take into consideration the strong and decided testimony which it bears both *to the righteousness of the law, and the infinite evil of sin.*

In the controversy between God and man, it is of the highest importance that it should be seen to which party the blame belongs. Never will the sinner become reconciled to his Maker, without the frank confession that God is right and he is wrong. Never will he repent of sin, until convinced of its aggravated guilt and turpitude. Whatever tends to proclaim the holiness, justice, and benevolence of the law, tends to exhibit the evil of transgression, and thus furnishes a motive to humiliation and contrition.

Now, one grand design of the Saviour's mission was, to "magnify the law and make it honorable." His sacrifice so far from declaring the law to be

unreasonable—so far from abolishing its obligation, enforces its observance by still more powerful motives, and proclaims it to be of universal and perpetual force. Rather than set aside its claims, and weaken its authority, he himself became a curse, in order that the curse might be removed from us. The Gospel calls on men to repent as well as to believe—to repent of *sin*. And what is sin but the transgression of the law? Just in proportion as the law is just, must sin be evil; and that it is just, is declared not only by the sufferings of the lost, but by the agony of the Son of God. He died to sustain its authority, while, at the same time, a way might be opened for the consistent pardon of the sinner.

The object of repentance is *sin*. In proportion, therefore, to the malignancy of sin, is the motive to repentance. Man will never repent of sin until convinced of its heinousness; but where is its heinousness so fully and forcibly demonstrated as in the tragedy of the cross? The design of the Saviour's sufferings was, to "condemn sin in the flesh"—to proclaim to all worlds its inexcusable-ness, criminality, and desert. That sin is offensive to God may, indeed, be seen in his *judgments*. His dealings with our race plainly show that he has a controversy with man. "The whole creation groaneth, and travaileth in pain," under the merited displeasure of Heaven. Every affliction

to which flesh is heir, not only teaches us that we are guilty, but also that sin is "that abominable thing which God hates." But neither the sorrows of earth, nor the woes of perdition, afford such an expressive exhibition of Jehovah's deep and immutable abhorrence of sin, as the unparalleled sufferings of the Son of God. It was for sin that he died, and it was by the hands of sinners, too, that he died. Victims may bleed by thousands; the most costly sacrifice that earth can furnish may be offered; but nothing, nothing save the precious blood of Christ, can constitute any effective propitiation for human guilt. Go ye, then, who make light of sin, and gaze upon that mournful spectacle. Behold the substitute of sinners as he quivers on yonder cross; and as you contemplate the thrilling scene, let your hearts melt to contrition, and your eyes overflow with grief, in view of that accursed thing which thus wounded and lacerated the immaculate Saviour. "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn as one mourneth for his only son."

It is said of Antonius, a Roman senator, that when he wished to provoke the people to avenge the death of Cæsar, slain in the senate by Brutus and Cassius, he held up to view the robe of the emperor, and exclaimed, "Here is the bloody robe of your emperor!" So to provoke your vengeance

against sin, would we point you to the cross, stained with the hallowed blood of the innocent but tortured victim. Behold the man! Behold what sin has done—*your* sin—*my* sin—the sin of a world in rebellion against the throne of heaven! Oh, drop those weapons to-day at the foot of the cross—cherish no longer those lusts that have crucified the Son of God.

IV. The exhibition of the cross is also admirably calculated to *dethrone from the human heart the principle of selfishness.*

Selfishness is the very essence of man's apostasy. No sooner did his affections become alienated from God, than they became absorbed in himself. Every form of human depravity may, perhaps, be traced to an inordinate and idolatrous self-love. We have every one "turned to his own way." "All seek their own, and not the things of Jesus Christ." Men are "lovers of their own selves," and in the pursuit of their private and selfish ends, encroach both upon the rights of God and of each other.

Now, we need some influence to overcome this reigning principle of our fallen nature; an influence by which we shall be drawn to God as the object of supreme affection and regard, and to our proper position in relation to the great family of

man with which we stand connected. That influence can be found alone in the cross. What can be more calculated to subdue the proud and selfish passions of the human heart, and restore us to the lost spirit of benevolence, than the contemplation of the love of God in Christ Jesus? What an example of pure, disinterested benevolence is here presented for our imitation. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." "A new commandment," says Jesus, "give I unto you, that ye love one another, *even as I have loved you.*" The Son of God was an incarnation of love. It was love that prompted him to assume the work of our redemption, and that carried him through all his scenes of conflict and trial, until he could say, "It is finished." Love breathed in his every word, and his every prayer. Love led him to take the bitter cup of suffering, and drink it to its very dregs; to bare his bosom to the sword of justice, and die in untold agonies on the accursed tree. "Now," says the Apostle, "if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." In the light of this exalted pattern, how odious appears the sin of selfishness, and how powerful the motive to active and self-denying benevolence. It was the contemplation of the love of Christ that led the primitive Christians to such noble deeds of self-

devotion to each other, and to a world in ruins. It was this that united them, as members of one great family, in mutual harmony and friendship. It was this that influenced them cheerfully to make any sacrifice of riches, honor, and ease, and to welcome poverty, reproach, suffering, and death, so that they might but please Christ, and advance the great interests of his kingdom. It was this that urged the heralds of salvation on from city to city, and from village to village, over land and over sea, resolved on filling the earth with the glorious and peaceful principles of their holy religion. The love of Christ *constrained* them. That love was in them stronger than death. It could endure all sufferings—brave all dangers—resist all seductions—surmount all difficulties. That love has lost none of its power. What it did formerly, it does still. True religion begins with the practical recognition of the principle, that we are not our own, but the Lord's. Henceforth we live for him, who gave his life a ransom for us. Instead of asking, in the spirit of selfishness, "Am I my brother's keeper?" we acknowledge ourselves to be "debtors to all men;" and the salvation we have found to be so precious to our own hearts, we endeavor to extend to all lands and all nations. There can be no motive to benevolence, to liberality, to self-sacrifice, like that which is derived

from the cross. The man who properly appreciates the love and condescension of Christ to him, can want no further impulse to do what he can for the promotion of the happiness of all whom his influence may reach.

V. Consider, in the next place, the *light which the cross sheds upon the moral character and condition of man, and its tendency to destroy his vain confidence and hopes*. Not only does it exhibit the evil and demerit of sin, but it also establishes the fact, that *we* are sinners—*universally* sinners. For as Christ “died for all,” so the Apostle teaches us “*all were dead*”—dead in sin, and under the penalty of death eternal. The design of the Saviour’s mission was to save the *lost*—he died for the *ungodly*—he suffered for the *unjust*. Such, in the view of the omniscient eye, was the character of our entire race, without a solitary exception. The provision of the Gospel is general, because the fall of the race is general; and if any man in this assembly should regard his case as an exception, what is this but a virtual declaration that the atonement was never made for him—salvation was never purchased for him. While the cross proclaims that there is salvation in Christ, it also proclaims that it is *in him alone*. Upon what, my hearer, do you base your hope of future happiness? Upon your *innocency*? But the cross declares that

you are guilty. The Son of God died to save none but sinners.

Do you found your hope upon *superficial views of the evil and desert of sin*? In the cross the malignity of sin is written in characters of blood.

Do you expect the happiness of heaven simply because *God is benevolent*? The cross declares that he is also *just*—so just that he will “by no means clear the guilty.” Rather than stain his justice, he stained the cross with the blood of his own beloved Son.

Is *morality* the ground of your confidence? In tones distinct and solemn, the cross cries in your ear, “By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified.” “If righteousness come by the law, then has Christ died in vain.” “Without shedding of blood there is no remission.”

Nothing, therefore, is so well adapted to make men acquainted with themselves, to sweep away all their refuges of lies, to impress them with their utter ruin and helplessness, as just views of the redemption of Christ. Other foundation can no man lay save that which has been laid in the atoning sacrifice of the Cross.

VI. There is also a wonderful adaption in the cross to *detach the affections of man from this vain and shadowy earth*. It is strikingly characteristic of all men in their fallen state, that “they mind

earthly things." The heart having been withdrawn from God, is now fixed with idolatrous attachment upon the world. We need some power to break this attachment, and teach our thoughts and aspirations to ascend to things spiritual and divine. That power may be found in the cross. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Absorbed in the glories of the cross, how insignificant and vain will appear to us all the glitter and fascinations of earth. Who that has drank at the fountain can be content with the streams? Who that has basked in the splendors of the Godhead, can be captivated with the charms of the creature?

"As by the light of opening day,
The stars are all concealed;
So earthly glories fade away,
When Jesus is revealed."

As a view of the sun in his unclouded splendor casts a shade upon every surrounding object, so a view of the Father's glory in the face of Jesus, eclipses all the glory of earth, and the things which once excited our admiration lose their attractions in the superior brilliancy with which we now become encircled. What are all the pleasures of earth when compared with "the joy of salvation?" To gaze upon the atoning Lamb, to contemplate

the wonders of redeeming mercy, to be ravished with the smile of God, to look up to heaven and behold there the eternal weight of glory laid up for me as my blissful portion—oh, what is the world, with all its pomp and tinsel, to me now? I have now opened my vision upon a brighter scene; I converse with substantial realities; I have in prospect an unfading inheritance, and my soul, leaving this dark and empty world behind, springs forward with exultation to seize the anticipated prize.

What a shade, then, does the cross cast over all the pageantry of earth. How does it stain the pride of human glory. The Son of God submitted to the lowest state of humiliation to teach us that his kingdom is not of this world, and to carry the thoughts and aspirations of his disciples forward to an incorruptible treasure, to unalloyed pleasures, and to unfading glory.

VII. The cross of Christ also affords the *highest encouragement* for alienated man to return to God. While it represents his state to be one of utter apostacy and ruin, it at the same time declares that there is hope. While it reveals to us a God of unbending justice, it also reveals one of boundless mercy. It is no easy matter for a sinner, deeply convinced of sin, to believe that he can be forgiven. On his own heart is written the sen-

tence of his condemnation, and without the revelation which God has made of himself in the Gospel of his grace, who that is conscious of his proper desert would dare to lift up his prayer for pardon? Who would attempt to cast himself at the feet of his offended sovereign with any hope of favor? The law of God, glorious as it is, worketh, with the disobedient, nothing but wrath. It may convict, but it can never convert. It may kill, but it can never make alive. It may condemn, but it can never justify. It may agitate the soul with terror, but it can never inspire hope. "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus," says the Apostle, "hath made me free from the law of sin and death; for what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh." Here alone is power over sin; here alone is pardon for the guilty. Flee not, O sinner, away from the presence of God in despair. Behold him as he comes forth to meet you, not with a countenance frowning with vengeance, but beaming with love. The claims of his dishonored justice have been fully met; the demands of his violated law have been fully satisfied. Lo, the cloud of wrath has vanished, and the rainbow of promise appears in the heavens, inviting you to look up and live. Crushed with the enor-

mity of your guilt, trembling on the verge of utter ruin, fix your eye of faith upon the bleeding, tortured victim, your substitute, your Redeemer, your advocate. See that stream as it flows to wash away your crimsoned stain. Hear that voice as it falls on your ear in tones of melting tenderness—

“This blood is for thy ransom shed,
I die that thou mayest live.”

Fallen as you are, you may yet be restored. You are not in the condition of apostate angels, shut up under chains of eternal darkness and despair. Your prison-door is opened, and you may now come forth into all the liberty of the sons of God. The dreadful sentence under which you lie may be repealed, and with confidence may you look up to the face of God, and call him your Father and your friend.

REMARKS.

1. We may learn from this subject the *grand theme of an evangelical and successful ministry*—Christ and his cross—the truth as it is in Jesus. This and this only can overcome man’s hostility to God, and restore him to holiness and bliss. Everything else will be found utterly impotent. The inculcation of the principles of morality, important as it may be in its place, can never win the heart

back to its forfeited rectitude. We may even proclaim the law in all its purity, its spirituality, and its comprehensiveness, but the more clearly the sinner is made to see the demands and the sanctions of that law, the more overwhelmed will he be with his ruin, and the more will his corruptions be developed. True, we must carry our hearers to Sinai; its dreadful thunders must be rolled upon their ears, and its lightnings be made to flash upon their vision. All this, however, is only to prepare them to gaze with wonder, gratitude, and hope upon the bleeding cross. Leading them away from every other dependence, they must be pointed to the Lamb of God as the one great sacrifice for sin, by which a fallen world can be brought back to loyalty and peace. This alone can meet our case. All other preaching is utterly powerless. Christ crucified alone is "the power of God unto salvation." There is, indeed, a way of preaching the cross that may render it "of none effect." The cross may be mentioned in every sermon, and in every sentence, while, after all, you may have only its shadow, its semblance. The precious doctrine which it embodies may be concealed, or so buried in human traditions and corruptions, that its glory may be completely tarnished, and its influence neutralized. It is a singular fact that the more men have multiplied

their crucifixes, the more have they lost sight of the crucified one. Christ must be preached as the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last; as a Saviour in all respects complete, the one and only name under heaven whereby men must be saved, our "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." And wherever he is thus preached, glorious signs will be seen to follow. The heart that can be reached by no other influence will be reached by this.

2. *How malignant and desperate must be that depravity which can resist the attractions of the cross.* I say *resist*; for powerful as may be those attractions, they may still be resisted. The influence which they exert, is not compulsory, but persuasive. While thousands and tens of thousands have been effectually drawn by them, myriads, on the other hand, have braced themselves up against their power, and forced their way onward to ruin. "Ye do always," said Stephen to the Jews, "*resist* the Holy Ghost." "The things of Jesus" had been presented to them; conviction fastened itself upon their consciences, but their proud hearts disdained the thought of looking for pardon to one, whom with wicked hands they had crucified and slain. Just so it is now. Many of my dear hearers, we fear, are doing precisely what men did centuries

ago. You have felt the power of the cross. There is not a heart in this assembly that has not felt it; and long, long ago, would it have melted you to penitence and love, had not its benevolent design been defeated by your own perverseness. Calculated and designed as the cross is to draw *all* men to God, let us not imagine that such is its actual influence. The attractions of the cross may be felt by all, and yet upon the hearts of multitudes the world may exert a preponderating influence. The sun is amply sufficient to shed light upon all, and yet some may choose to enshroud themselves in darkness. A feast may be sufficient for all, and yet many who are invited to it, may beg to be excused. Our text “has unquestionable reference to the fulfillment of prophecy, respecting *the ultimate triumph* of the cross. Just as if it should be said, that a victorious king will surely succeed in subduing a *whole nation* of rebels, although many of the incorrigible would perish in the struggle.”

The salvation of the gospel, designed for all, and offered to all, may be rejected; and of all sins of which man may be guilty, this is marked with the deepest aggravations. Think of the light which it resists—think of the love which it abuses—think of the obligations which it violates. Oh, where, in God’s universe, can there be a crime like this! What kind of depravity must that be which can

hold out against the pleadings of infinite mercy, the tears, the groans, the agony of a beseeching Saviour? Men may often be subdued by kindness, when they can be subdued by no other influence; but the sinner will neither be melted by kindness, nor awed by terror. While he braves the vengeance of Sinai, the scenes of Calvary excite only his idle gaze, if not his impious contempt. Oh, how deeply has man apostatized from God!

3. Those who resist the power of the cross *must perish, and perish, too, under circumstances of peculiar aggravation*. What possible hope can there be in their case? With what more powerful motives could they be plied? The motives of the gospel appeal to every principle of our nature—to our sense of right, to our gratitude, to our fears, and to our hopes. If the heart is not melted by the love of Jesus, what *can* melt it? What other influence can be brought to bear upon it? What further means shall God employ to win it? Divine power seems at a loss what more to do. “O! Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O! Judah, what shall I do unto thee?”

Surely, my hearer, you have reason to be alarmed at yourself. The most powerful means that God can employ to save you, have all been employed in vain. No other Saviour will ever be

revealed — no richer blood will ever be shed — no higher display of divine compassion will ever be made — no other redemption will ever be offered. What, then, remains but a “certain, fearful looking-for of judgment, and fiery indignation!” And, oh, to perish beneath the cross—what a perdition! —to go from all the light, and love, and glory of Calvary, down to the chambers of eternal gloom, and anguish, and despair. What groans will be like those extorted from those who perish under these circumstances! What tears like those that are shed in remembrance of redemption once offered and spurned! O! my hearer, will you thus perish? Will you rush on to perdition with the painful consciousness that you might have been saved, and would not? Will you bring upon yourself that “sorer punishment” which awaits those who have trodden under foot the Son of God, accounted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and have done despite to the spirit of grace? Can nothing more be done to save you? Must we give you up in despair? Oh, that you would fix your eye upon that cross. Behold there your only help — hold out no longer — sink at the feet of your injured, neglected Saviour, and there weep, adore, and live forever.

SERMON VII.

THE ABILITY OF CHRIST TO SAVE.

Mighty to save.—ISAIAH lxiii. 1.

THE bare announcement of these words, will, at once suggest the distinguished personage to whom they refer. The passage is connected with a prediction relative to the triumph of the Son of God. As a mighty conqueror, he is represented as returning from the field of conflict, covered with the blood of his enemies, and also as the successful deliverer of his own people. "Who is this," asks the prophet, "that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments, from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength?" Bozrah was the chief city of Edom, and the Edomites were the avowed enemies of Israel. Here they are referred to as a type or representation of all those anti-Christian powers, or opposers of Christ and his cause, who are destined to signal and fearful overthrow.

In answer to the question, the Messiah is represented as saying, "I that speak in righteousness, *mighty to save*," — righteous in giving sentence

against his foes, and mighty in bringing salvation to his church.

Again, the prophet inquires, "Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine fat?" To which the Messiah responds: "I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with me; for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiments. For the day of vengeance is in my heart, and the year of my redeemed is come." Thus will the glorious conqueror eventually crush all his obstinate foes, and appear for the deliverance of his oppressed and afflicted people.

The special object of our present discourse will be to consider *the ability of Christ as a Saviour*.

Nothing is more evident than that man *needs* a Saviour. Fallen from his original estate of purity and happiness; doomed by heaven's violated law to everlasting chains of darkness; enslaved to sin, to the world, and to Satan, and utterly unable to recover himself from his deep and ruinous apostasy, help must come from some other source, or his perdition is certain and unavoidable. Who, then, will become our Redeemer? Who will satisfy for us the demands of insulted justice, and meet the claims of a violated law? Who will pay down the price for our ransom, break off our

fetters of iniquity, and restore us to the forfeited friendship and favor of heaven? To these momentous inquiries earth maintains a profound silence. Among all the sons of men, not one can be found competent to save. Among all the ranks of created intelligences around the throne, not an individual can step forward and say, "*I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O! death, I will be thy plagues; O! grave, I will be thy destruction.*" But — hark! what voice is that which falls upon our ear in such tones of pathos and tenderness? "Deliver him from going down to the pit; *I have found a ransom.*" When no human arm could effect our deliverance; when all angelic sympathy and power were unavailing, Jesus offers himself as our substitute and Redeemer. Is he, then, competent to the task he has undertaken? Can we repose in him with confidence? May we, without any fear of disappointment, venture our immortal interests in his hands, assured of his succor and protection?

In our text, he proclaims himself as "*mighty to save;*" and in order to establish this claim,

I. Consider in the first place *the infinite dignity of his person.*

Man needs an *almighty* Saviour. What but Omnipotence can subdue the strength of human depravity, protect us from the assaults of our nu-

merous foes, sustain us under the conflicts and trials of our faith, restore our bodies from the tomb, and conduct us in safety to the kingdom of eternal rest? The same power that created us, must redeem us; the same being against whom we have sinned, must extend to us forgiveness. Whatever others may think of this matter, I am sure that among all who have any acquaintance with their real wants as fallen beings, there can be but one sentiment. What Christian, conscious of his weakness and dependence, would trust to any other than an Almighty arm? What Christian would commit his undying spirit to a mere creature? What Christian would depend on a mere creature for pardon, for holiness, for guidance, and for ultimate triumph over his spiritual foes? The supreme Deity of Christ is so inseparably connected with the Christian's own experience, that he has the witness of this truth in himself. Rob the Saviour of his Divinity, and you at once rob us of all our hope.

“Some take him a creature to be,
A man or an angel at most;
Sure these have no feelings like me,
Nor know themselves wretched and lost.
So guilty, so helpless am I,
I could not confide in his word,
Unless I could make the reply,
That Christ is ‘my Lord and my God.’”

“Look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else.” “Our Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.” Here rests our confidence. Jesus is *divine* no less than human—the mighty God—God over all, blessed for evermore—the Alpha and Omega—the beginning and the ending—the Almighty. All things were made by Him, and he upholdeth all things by the word of his power.

Though he made his appearance as a helpless babe, and as a man of sorrows, the evidences of his divine majesty and power would at times beam forth with transcendent lustre. The winds and the waves were obedient to his mandate. At his word, diseases were healed, devils were dispossessed, and the dead brought to life. To the leper he said, “I will, be thou clean, and immediately his leprosy was cleansed.” To the paralytic he said—“Stretch forth thy hand,” and the hand was nerved with new energy. To the blind he said—“Receive thy sight,” and behold they see. All this is but an illustration of his power over the mind and heart. He who created the world can create the soul anew. He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, can shine into our benighted hearts. He who calmed the raging billows, can say to our turbulent passions, “Peace, be still.” He who expelled demons can effectually bruise the serpent’s

head. He who cleansed the leper can cleanse us from our moral defilement. He who called the dead to life can quicken us, even though dead in trespasses and in sins.

II. As another evidence of Christ's ability to save, we refer, in the second place, to *the all-sufficiency of his atonement*.

Man is saved, not merely by an exertion of divine power, but by the payment of an adequate price. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." The atonement is an expedient to secure the sinner from merited punishment in consistency with the honor of the divine government. We need a Saviour who can procure our release from the penalty of the violated law, and yet exhibit that law as righteous and immutable—a Saviour who, while he pardons sin, yet proclaims it in all its turpitude—a Saviour who, while he removes all obstructions to the free communication of divine mercy, still declares that God is holy and just. Such a Saviour is Jesus. Instead of abrogating the law, he fulfilled and honored it. Instead of representing sin as a trifle, he proclaimed it to be that abominable thing which God hates. In him mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace kissed each other. "Him hath God set forth to be a propitiation, that he might

be just, and the justifier of him that believeth." The sacrifice which he made on the cross answers all the ends of the actual infliction of the penalty upon the transgressor. He has thus become "*the end of the law* for righteousness to every one that believeth." He who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. "He bore our sins in his own body on the tree—bore our griefs and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, and by his stripes we are healed." His one offering constituted a complete and effective propitiation. On the part of God, every obstacle to the sinner's salvation is now removed. He can pardon without any disparagement either to his holy character or law. The eternal throne, we are now assured, rests upon an immovable basis, while mercy, bleeding mercy, in all her attractions, stands ready to embrace the returning wanderer and assure him of a free and full acquittal.

The completeness and all-sufficiency of the Saviour's atonement rests upon the exalted dignity of his person. It was this that gave to his sufferings, though endured only for a limited period, such transcendent value and efficacy. The law demanded a satisfaction proportioned to the magnitude of the offence. The offence was infi-

nite; the satisfaction must be infinite too. This satisfaction it was utterly beyond the power of any creature to make. Even the most exalted angel could not, by his sufferings, have afforded any adequate expression of Heaven's deep abhorrence of sin, and vindicated the majesty and honor of the broken law. This great end can be secured only by the sacrifice of the Son of God. The incarnate Deity must expire in agony on the cross. Thus the ransom was paid down—the breach was repaired—Heaven is rendered propitious—the guilty may be pardoned, and these fallen natures restored to purity and bliss. Oh, wondrous scheme! In all the universe there is nothing like it. It stands out before men and angels as the wonder of wonders. Precious sacrifice! Oh, for an angel's voice to proclaim its worth! “By one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.” Oh, thou who didst command the light to shine out of darkness, shine into our hearts, that we may behold thy glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

III. The ability of Christ to save is also based upon the *efficacy of his intercession*. Hence, says the Apostle, “He is able to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” To intercede is to petition in behalf of another. As

sinners we need an intercessor with God. His infinite majesty and purity forbid our approach to him without a mediator. Who will undertake to plead his own cause? What can we say either in justification or palliation of our guilt? On the ground of personal merit the whole world must stand convicted and condemned before God. But, says John, "if any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." "Who is he," says Paul, "that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." The *death* of Christ *procured* our redemption; his *intercessory life* secures to us the *benefits* of that redemption. Our great High Priest, having offered himself "once for all," then entered into the holy of holies, there to appear before God for us. There, as the lamb that was slain, he presents his wounds, urges his merits, and pleads the cause of all who confide in him. Nor does he plead in vain. "Him the Father heareth always." It is through his intercession that believers obtain every needed favor. Their persons and services are accepted for his sake. Their prayers become available only by virtue of

the plea of their great advocate. "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father *in my name*, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you forever." "It often happens, among men, that the most urgent petitions, the most touching appeals on behalf of the oppressed, the wretched and the needy, are permitted to remain disregarded and unheard. But not one request of our Divine Advocate can possibly share this fate."—*Symington*. "Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips." Ps. xxi. 2. During the days of his flesh, we are informed that he "offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, and was heard in that he feared." Who, then, can doubt the prevalence of his intercession, when before the mercy seat, in the upper temple, he pleads the merits of his atoning blood? His plea is enforced by an argument that must prove effectual. "He asks nothing for which he has not paid the full price of his precious blood." He asks nothing but what is in accordance with his Father's will, and what has been actually pledged to him in the eternal covenant of redemption.

A poor woman, who had travelled many weary miles on foot, day and night, once presented her-

self before the Governor of Georgia, informing him that she was the mother of a man who was to be executed four days hence, and that she had come with all possible speed from another State to beg a respite of his sentence. The Governor told her it was too late, that even should he grant the respite she could not possibly convey it to the condemned man, in her exhausted state, in time to save him. "Only give me the respite," she said, "and it shall reach him in time. I shall see him anyhow before he dies, but I have no time to lose." "Madam," said the Governor, "I most deeply sympathize with you, and it pains me to tell you that I should violate my official duty to grant the respite. I have examined the case, and cannot find a single mitigating circumstance in it in your son's favor." "O, Governor," she passionately exclaimed, "my son is not a murderer at heart. His disposition was peaceable; he was not himself when he committed the deed. O, Governor! here on my knees before you I pray you have pity upon a poor heart-broken widowed mother!" The spectators of this trying scene sobbed aloud, as the chief magistrate with tears lifted the poor suppliant from her knees, and repeated, by a shake of the head, what he had already said. The mother gave an indescribably agonizing groan, and arose from her knees to

depart; but as her foot fell upon the step that was to conduct her away from the habitation of hope, she cast a melting look, and commenced her last appeal with "O, Governor! for God's sake,"—when she fell to the floor exhausted by her emotions. At length, rising as if moved by the thought that she was losing the precious moments which would enable her to see her son alive, she departed, bearing the sad tidings that her touching intercession had been of no avail.

Let us rejoice that *we* have an intercessor whose love and sympathies are not only tenderer than those of the fondest earthly parent, but who will never plead in vain for our pardon when we commit our cause to his hands.

IV. The power of Christ to save will further appear, from the fact that *he saves in the most desperate cases.*

The salvation of any sinner, even of the least, is an act of amazing power and grace; but as the skill of a physician is most clearly evinced in the recovery of those whose diseases are the most inveterate and dangerous, so the ability of Christ, as a Saviour, is most strikingly illustrated in rescuing those who are nearest to the pit of destruction, and farthest from the hope of the Gospel. In offering himself to us as a Saviour, he makes no exceptions to the

cases of any, however malignant their depravity, or enormous their crimes. "Him that cometh unto me," he says, "I will in no wise cast out." Among the thousands who have ventured their souls upon him, not one has been repulsed and disappointed. No case, however obstinate, is beyond his skill. He can pardon the most guilty; he can cleanse the vilest of the vile. His grace abounded even in the salvation of his persecutors and murderers. Hear the testimony of one, once the most bitter enemy of the cross. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." Were we permitted to have a view of the glorified throng in heaven, we might, doubtless, behold among "the great multitude," numbers whose sins were of the very deepest dye, and whose condition was apparently the most hopeless; but the blood of atonement availed even for them. Their robes, once covered with defilement, now shine with the lustre of the noon-day sun. From the lowest depths of corruption and ruin, they have been exalted to seats of unspeakable honor and felicity. Oh, what cannot a Saviour's grace accomplish! What guilty creature may not look up with confidence and hope? "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." Is there one present who is ready to regard him-

self as a sinner above all other sinners—one whose sins prove like a burden too heavy to be borne? It is to you, especially, I would turn with the gracious assurance that there is forgiveness with God, that he may be feared. Yes, if there be in this house one of those whom Whitefield used to call “the devil’s castaways,” desperate as your condition may appear to human view—to your own view—you may yet become a trophy of that very grace which you have so long and so obstinately spurned. Christ “came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” Our business, as the heralds of his grace, is with *sinners*—sinners indiscriminately. It may be that you have sinned with a high hand and an outstretched arm. Your sins not only exceed all computation, but are also of a crimson dye. You have sinned against distinguished light, the most tender compassion, and the most solemn warnings. In opposition to all the calls of God’s word, his providence and Spirit, you have gone on in a course of impenitence, treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. Alarming, however, as your condition is, we dare not abandon you to ruin. At the very mouth of the pit, the voice of long insulted Goodness yet speaks, and the cross of a dying Saviour yet appears in view. Oh, that you may catch the sound, and fix your wandering eye upon the bleed-

ing victim. "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." Behold just such a Saviour as your exigency demands—the mighty God, ready to pardon, omnipotent to save. Perish not when help is so nigh. See! he stretches out his arm for your rescue. Turn not away from the kind deliverer. Plunge not yourself into irrecoverable ruin.

V. In further illustration of the Saviour's power to save, contemplate now the *completeness of his salvation*. Whom he saves, he saves to the uttermost—saves not in part, but completely and forever. The work that he commences, he carries forward and consummates. When he pardons a sinner, he pardons him fully. His sins are cast into the depths of the sea, there to be buried in eternal oblivion. Never more shall he come under condemnation—never more shall the second death have any power over him. The divine promise stands pledged for his security. Heaven and earth may fail, but the word and the grace of God abide forever. And whom Christ pardons he also *sanctifies*. Gradual and slow as may appear the process, the ultimate accomplishment of the work is certain. "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." His Church shall be presented before him, "without spot or wrinkle,

or any such thing." There is no temptation to which his people are exposed in which he cannot succor them; no trial in which he cannot sustain them; no perplexity in which he cannot extricate them; no foe from whom he cannot deliver them. Even the last enemy, Death, shall be vanquished, and we shall come off more than conquerors, through him that loved us. All that we lost in Adam shall be more than restored in Christ. He came that we might have life even "*more abundantly*." Our entire nature will ere long be restored. Even corruption shall put on incorruption, and mortality shall put on immortality, "fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." Oh, what a Saviour is Jesus! "mighty to save"—mighty to deliver, to defend, to protect, to guide and to console—mighty to bring every thought into captivity to himself—mighty to sustain us in the last conflict—mighty to burst the bands of death, and raise these vile bodies from the tomb, clothed with immortal vigor and unfading beauty—mighty to conduct us up with joy into his Father's presence, and make us kings and priests unto our God forever.

VI. Reflect, now, on the *vast number whom Christ saves*—not only sinners of every grade of

depravity, but of every rank, condition, and nation. What numbers have already been redeemed. The favored John beheld in heaven “a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, clothed with white robes, and with palms in their hands.”

Ever since the gracious promise was given, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, the work of redeeming mercy has been gradually going forward, rescuing one after another from the dominion of sin, and restoring them to holiness and bliss. From that memorable period when the light of hope first beamed upon our ruined world, the Son of God has been gathering in a chosen people to his kingdom. What myriads, even amid the dim light of a typical dispensation, looked to him as their great propitiation, and rejoiced in him as all their hope and salvation. What countless thousands flocked to him when his Gospel was attended with such signal triumphs in the early days of its propagation. The Son of God, like a mighty prince, has gone forth “conquering and to conquer.” New accessions have been continually made to the ranks of the redeemed, and new songs of rejoicing and praise have burst from the lips of sinners rescued by his power and grace. Even in the most degenerate times, witnesses have been raised up for the truth, and “martyrs have

bled in sufficient numbers to make a nation." The Son of God is still urging forward his conquests. The virtue of his blood, and the efficacy of his intercession, remain the same in all ages. Soon his dominion shall become universal, extending from the rivers to the ends of the earth. His sons shall come from afar, and his daughters from the ends of the earth. The Lord shall make bare his arm among all nations, and all flesh shall see the salvation of our God. Divine influences shall descend, not merely like the gentle dew, but like the copious *shower*—the word of God shall have "free course," nations shall be "born at once," and bow in sweet submission to the mighty conqueror; Jews and Gentiles, bond and free, shall shout his praise, and bring their willing offerings at his feet; and when, at last, he comes to gather his ransomed people home, they shall come from the East and the West, from the North and the South, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

It is a great work to save a single sinner; what then must it be to save such unnumbered millions? And yet there is virtue in Christ, not only to save all who trust in him, but to save even those who spurn his mercy. They are lost not from any deficiency in his atonement, but solely on account of their unbelief and perverseness. Every sinner who

goes to perdition, goes there with the painful consciousness that he *might* have been saved, but that he *would* not.

REMARKS.

1. Let *this subject inspire the believer with confidence and joy.* The Redeemer in whom you trust, is mighty to save. “What then, have you to fear? Who shall pluck you out of his hands? What weapon formed against you shall prosper? “The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath thee are his everlasting arms.” Weak and defenceless as you are in yourself, through the grace of your divine Saviour, you can do all things. Opposed as you may be in your progress by earth and hell, if he be for you, who can be against you? Let the law thunder its anathemas, let the world frown, Satan accuse, and the King of terrors present himself in his most formidable aspect, in the hands of such a Saviour you are secure. “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died.” “I know,” said the apostle, “whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” “Well, brother,” said the Rev. Matthew Wilks, to his colleague in the ministry, when at the point of death, “I have sometimes

heard you say in the pulpit, that if you had a hundred souls, you could venture them *all* on Christ; can you say so now." The dying saint, though worn nearly to a skeleton, and almost suffocated with phlegm, made an effort to speak, and with eyes beaming with light and hope, he replied, "A million! a million!"

Fear not, believer, to trust yourself without reserve, and without wavering to the protection of such a Saviour. All that he has promised, he will most assuredly perform; your hope rests upon a basis that is immovable; not upon the sand, but upon the eternal rock. He who has already become to you wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, will ere long become to you complete and eternal redemption.

2. What *abundant encouragement is here afforded for sinners to look to Christ*. To whom else can you look? In what name but his can you come before the throne of heaven? Whose righteousness but his can screen you in the day of wrath? Whose blood but his can wash away your stain, and heal your wounded spirit? Whose arm but his can conduct you in safety through this world of temptation and sin, and guard you through the dark and lonely vale? Will you attempt to save yourself? Will you look for salvation to any created power? Why so reluctant to

confide in Jesus? Do you fear he will disappoint you? Can you question his ability? Can you distrust his willingness? Is he not as infinite in love as he is in power?

“His heart is made of tenderness,
His bowels yearn with love.”

It is his *business* to save. This was the errand for which he came into the world. For this he was born and lived; for this he suffered and died; for this he arose in triumph from the tomb, and for this he is now exalted at the right hand of the Majesty of heaven, “ever living to make intercession.” Oh! that you would now test his power and faithfulness.

“Venture on him, venture freely,
Let no other trust intrude.
None but Jesus,
Can do helpless sinners good.”

3. But let me also remark. *How fearful must it be to fall under the vengeance of such a Saviour.* If he is mighty to save, he is also mighty to destroy. If he can exalt his friends to seats of honor and glory, he can also thrust his foes down to the lowest hell. The Lamb of God is also “the Lion of the tribe of Judah,” and woe to those who rouse his indignation, and become the victims of his vengeance. “The great day of the wrath of the lamb

is come, and who shall be able to stand ?” “ Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.”

Why, my dear hearer, will you any longer spurn the offer of a blood-bought salvation ! Do you not need it ? Are you willing to dispense with it ? Can you innocently refuse it ? Why, when it is your privilege to be saved, will you eternally perish ? Were no salvation tendered to you, your condition would be deplorable indeed ; why, then, when it *is* tendered, why, when it is even *pressed* upon your acceptance, will you still treat it with neglect ? Oh ! it is a blot on human nature that I must stand here, and plead with you a moment to accept the gracious proffer. An immortal being, sinking to everlasting burnings, and yet unwilling to be saved ! What can I do more than to beseech you not to bolt the door of heaven against yourself. In the name of the eternal God, I call upon you not to despise the precious blessings of redemption. Our hearts yearn over you with the tenderest compassion. We know your misery, and would rejoice to welcome you to the same hopes and felicity which we have experienced. But I have done. “ If ye will not hear, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride.”

SERMON VIII.

MEN MAY BE SAVED IF THEY WILL.

Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.—REVELATION xxii. 17.

THE source from which this invitation comes entitles it to our special attention. It is the call of divine mercy to a world perishing in sin. The blessings of salvation are here, as in numerous other places, represented to us under the similitude of *water*—living water—pure, refreshing, and free. In what language could the volume of divine truth have more appropriately closed than with a proclamation like this? The Old Testament, representative of the legal economy, closes with the language of denunciation; the New, representative of a better covenant, with the language of invitation. The Son of God having ascended to his seat of majesty and glory, and having inspired his servants to record the achievements of his mercy, now sends forth the announcement that all things for the redemption of man are ready, and that whosoever will, may partake of the flowing stream, and live forever.

The doctrine of the text is this—*Every man may be saved, if he be willing.*

This important and animating truth we now purpose to confirm and apply.

I. And my first remark is,—*God has made ample provision for the salvation of the human race.* Without an atonement for sin, the condition of man would have been utterly hopeless. Such an atonement was necessary, not to render God merciful, but to render the exercise of his mercy consistent with the claims of justice. Justice to himself, justice to his law, justice to the moral universe, demanded that the soul that had sinned should die. Better had it been for the whole race of man to have perished, than for the throne of Heaven to have been dishonored, and the authority of the divine law to have been impaired. If the penalty does not fall upon the sinner, there must be provided for him a substitute—one who will take his place, suffer in his stead, and whose sufferings will answer all the ends of the literal infliction of the penalty. The Son of God has, accordingly, become “the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” “Him hath God set forth to be a propitiation—to declare his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.” On the part of God,

every obstacle in the way of the sinner's pardon is now removed. The penalty of the law may be remitted, and yet the government of God fully vindicated and honored. The fearful consequences of sin may be averted, and yet its malignity and desert be presented to the moral universe in an aspect the most solemn and impressive.

And this atonement is made for the *world*. It is a public exhibition of God's feelings towards sin, and a proclamation of the immutable righteousness and obligation of his law. From its very nature, therefore, it must be *general*. Its value and efficacy are not to be measured by those who are actually saved, but by its intrinsic virtue, and its benevolent design. Were millions more redeemed than will eventually be found among "the great multitude," no atonement more ample would be demanded than that which was made by the offering of Christ "once for all." "By the grace of God he has tasted death for every man." "He is the propitiation not for our sins only"—not for the sins of believers only—"but for the sins of *the whole world*;" or, in the language of Calvin, "Christ suffered for the sins of *the whole world*, and is through the kindness of God indiscriminately *offered to all*." The language of the inspired writers on this subject is as broad as it can be. They speak of the atonement as *universal*—as designed

for the *race*, without any restriction—for the *world*—for the *unjust*—for *sinner*s—for the *lost*—for the *dead* in sin. It is sufficient not only for those who receive it and are saved by it, but for those who reject it, and who, in consequence of that rejection, fall under a heavier condemnation. The fact that the divine *purpose* is limited, by no means limits the value of the atonement. The two are entirely distinct, and perfectly harmonious. The one respects the *purchase* of redemption; the other its *application*. God has placed every man under a dispensation of mercy. There is no legal impediment in the way of the salvation of a single individual who truly repents and believes the Gospel. No one will perish because pardon was not attainable, but simply because he would not accept it. There is no danger that the provisions of the Gospel will be exhausted—that more may possibly come to the fountain of life than can meet with a supply. In Christ there is an infinite and inexhaustible fullness—“enough for each, enough for all, enough for evermore.”

II. My second remark in confirmation of our position is this,—Salvation is not only *provided* for all, but also *offered* to all. The universal offer is founded upon the universal provision. If the one were limited, the other must be limited too. There

would be a manifest inconsistency in inviting men indiscriminately to be saved, were there any deficiency or limitation in the provision made for human salvation—just the same inconsistency as there would be in sending forth a general invitation to a feast, when there is in fact provision made only for a few. The invitations of the Gospel are extended to men with all sincerity and earnestness, and they are as general as they can be made. They extend to all nations—to all colors and complexions—to all ranks and orders of men. Our commission authorizes us to preach the Gospel—to proclaim the news of salvation *in all the world, and to every creature*. There is not a son or daughter of Adam, be they who they may, or what they may, to whom we are not instructed to make the joyful announcement; and if there are still human beings to be found to whom it has not been made, it must be attributed, not to any limitation in the Gospel offer, but entirely to the neglect of duty on the part of the Church. Long ere this, the sound of salvation should have gone forth throughout our entire earth, and there should not be a single sinner left to whom is not made known the way of pardon and life through a crucified Redeemer.

Let us hear the voice of God as it speaks to us from the sacred page. “Ho, every one that thirst-

eth; come ye to the waters.” “In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.” “The Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst, Come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

Could language be more general and explicit? Suppose you had prepared an ample feast for all the poor and destitute in your neighborhood, in what language could you more suitably extend a general invitation than to send forth the proclamation, “Whosoever will, let him come and partake of the provisions freely.” Thus, too, runs our commission as ministers to all the famishing and dying. “As many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.” With this commission before me, I feel fully justified in calling upon every sinner in this assembly, to repair to the feast of mercy. We except none. We say to each and to all—“Come, for all things are now ready.”

“Come all the world, come sinner thou,
All things in Christ are ready now.”

III. That sinners may be saved if they will, is further evident from the fact, that *God is sincerely willing that men should accept his gracious offer*. He means just what he says. His language is the language

not of mockery, but of sincerity. He invites you to be saved, because he desires that you may be saved. Why should he tender to you salvation, if, after all, he were unwilling that you should accept it? His invitations, his commands, his exhortations, his pleadings, are all expressions of his unbounded benevolence — all so many proofs that he is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” Why call upon you to repent, if he does not desire your repentance? Why call upon you to believe, if he is not willing that you should believe? Why call upon you to accept of pardon and life, if he prefers that you should remain under condemnation and perish? “As I live,” saith the Lord God, “I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.” “He will have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth.” “O! Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I, but ye would not.” “Oh, that there were such a heart in them to fear me, and keep my commandments.”

To suppose, then, that God is unwilling to save you, is both a denial of his love, and an impeachment of his veracity. Why has he stretched out his arm for your salvation, if he is still reluctant that you may be saved? Why did he not spare his own Son, but deliver him up for us all? What means the tragic scene of the cross? Why those

tears—that blood? What, too, mean the drawings of the Holy Spirit? Why does he come to your heart, and present to you the things of Jesus? “The Spirit and the bride say *Come*.” How often have you heard “the still small voice” whispering to your inmost soul, “Come to Jesus — come to heaven!” Not only has the Spirit awakened in you a consciousness of guilt, but kindly pointed you to the source of pardon. He has come, not to torment you before the time, but to prove to you the Sanctifier and Comforter. Every movement of that blessed agent upon your heart, proclaims God’s willingness that you may be saved. *Willingness* did I say? God is more than willing that you may be saved. He cherishes for your salvation, the deepest solicitude. He not only invites you to be saved; he *urges* you to be saved. His calls are the most importunate and pressing. He waits on you with much long suffering. All the day long he stretches forth his hand unto a gainsaying and disobedient people. With open arms he stands ready to receive you. He will welcome your return. He will clasp you to his bosom. He will freely pardon all your crimes. He will grant you a place in his redeemed family, and will exalt you to seats of unspeakable honor and felicity. Oh, think not of God as reluctant to save. “He delighteth in mercy.” His heart is fixed on the sal-

vation of men. You cannot afford his benevolence higher gratification than by at once accepting the redemption which he has so dearly purchased, and which he now so freely offers.

IV. We remark farther. There is nothing to hinder men from accepting the salvation which God so sincerely and freely offers, but what arises from *the indisposition of their own hearts*. What other hinderance can be conceived to lie in the way? The terms on which salvation is tendered, are the most simple and easy—terms which all can understand, and with which all can comply, if they are so disposed. I know that the Scriptures sometimes represent men as under an *inability*, but it is an inability which arises, not from the want of natural capacity, but from voluntary depravity. What can hinder them from loving God if they are willing? From repenting of sin if they are willing? From coming to Christ if they are willing? To be willing to perform your duty is to perform it; to be willing to be saved, is to be saved. “If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land.” “Ye will not,” says Jesus, “come to me that ye might have life.”

The very fact that God offers you salvation, implies that in some sense you have the power to accept it. To invite a man to a feast when it is

known that he cannot comply with the invitation, is only to aggravate his misery by telling him of a privilege of which he cannot avail himself. It is admitted that men are *dependent on the influence of the Spirit*--so dependent, that if that influence be withdrawn, their doom becomes irreversibly fixed. It is a dependence, however, that grows entirely out of their perverseness. They need the Spirit, not to give them any new mental capacity, not to impart to them the faculty that may enable them to love God, and obey his commands, but simply, to *dispose* them to do what they were previously under obligation to do, and for the neglect of which they were wholly criminal and inexcusable. Every man who is not a Christian, is prevented from being one, only by his own unwillingness; and if he has any just views of his own state, he must himself be conscious of the fact. He may labor to convince himself, and to convince others that there is some other obstacle in his way—that he would be a Christian if he could; but after all his attempts at self-justification, he is far from being at ease. Conscience still takes the side of God, and the secret fear haunts his mind that all his refuges may, in the end, prove “refuges of lies.” He knows that whatever may be the strength of his corruptions, he is still acting freely,—just as freely in rejecting the offer of salvation,

as he would were he to accept it. You cannot rid yourself of this consciousness of moral freedom and responsibility. It will follow you through life—it will follow you in death—it will follow you to the judgment; and it will abide with you forever. Invent and urge what pleas you may, you still feel that your rejection of the Gospel is criminal, and that it is criminal only because it is wilful.

V. I remark once more, *None who comply with the Saviour's invitation in the text shall be excluded.* "Him that cometh unto me," he says, "I will in no wise cast out." And will he falsify his word? Has he promised what he will not fulfill? Has he encouraged expectations only to be disappointed? Why does he invite you to come if he means to spurn you from his presence? Why did he purchase the water of life for sinners if he is not willing that they should partake of it? Think of the sacrifice he made for your redemption; think of the perfection of his atonement; think of the design of his mediation; think of the benevolence of his heart; think of the tenderness of his invitations, and of the earnestness of his expostulations, and then say, Can there remain a single doubt of his readiness to welcome all who come to him thirsting for the waters of salvation? What penitent has he ever repulsed? Against what

suppliant has he closed his ear? Who has asked and not received? Who has sought and not found? Who has knocked to whom it has not been opened? What sinner now in torment can plead that he was willing to be saved, but that there was no salvation for him? What sinner on earth can honestly declare that he applied for the water of life, and that it was refused him? We know that men sometimes plead that they have made efforts to be saved, which have proved wholly unavailing. They have imagined that they were entirely willing to be saved, but that Christ was unwilling to receive them. But instead of questioning either his benevolence or veracity, let them rather question their own sincerity. The fault was not in him, but wholly in themselves. "Ye shall find me, if ye shall search for me with all your heart."

No guilt, however aggravated, no sins, however numerous, can constitute any bar to your salvation, if you are now willing to accept it on the appointed terms. Were your salvation to depend, in any degree, on your own goodness and merit, you might well despair of it forever; but the water of life is tendered to you *freely*, "without money and without price." The same precious blood that can save one sinner, can save another, can save all, even the most vile and unworthy.

Some of you, however, may suppose that your

salvation may be *hindered by some secret purpose of God*. But if *secret*, why perplex yourself about it? Leave the volume of the decrees in the hands of him “who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will,” and who will, in the end, show that “he hath done all things well.” “Secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but those things that are revealed belong unto us, and to our children forever.”

The purposes of God never excluded a single soul from salvation. They only render the salvation of a portion of the human race sure, when without those purposes all would perish. The election of grace damns none, and it never fails to save all who are willing to be saved. The doctrine is never introduced in the Scriptures to discourage any anxious inquirer, or as throwing the least obstacle in the way of his pardon; but to magnify the riches of divine grace, and as a motive both to humility and diligence. Only comply with the terms of the Gospel, and you may be as sure of your election as though you were permitted to see your name enrolled in the Lamb's book of life. There ought to be no more difficulty with the purpose of God in reference to salvation, than there is in reference to any other event. You believe that God has determined the events of your life and death; but do you, there-

fore, neglect the use of those means which he has appointed for your preservation? Do you refuse to partake of daily food, or, when sick, to receive the medicine prescribed by your physician, with the plea that, if God has determined you shall die, his purpose must be accomplished, no matter what precautions you may use to prevent the result? And why reason thus in reference to your salvation? Are not the means and the end connected in the one case as well as in the other? Does the mere fact that, in the divine mind, an event is certain, at all interfere either with your freedom or duty? What if we should reject the doctrine of foreordination altogether, would there not be the same difficulty connected with the divine *foreknowledge*? It is just as certain that what God foreknows will take place, as what he foreordains; and yet who ever thinks of urging God's universal knowledge as a reason for neglecting acknowledged duty? Your immediate concern, my hearer, is not with election, but with repentance. As one has significantly remarked, Before you enter the university of Predestination, you must first enter the grammar school of repentance. It is thus only that you will be enabled to "make your calling and election *sure*." If you have evidence that you have chosen Christ as your Saviour, then have you evidence that Christ has chosen you.

REFLECTIONS.

1. *Let this subject excite our admiration of the wonderful grace and condescension of God towards sinners.* God has done so much for the salvation of every human being, that his eternal happiness is now suspended upon an act of his own choice. Every man may be saved if he will; and what more could we ask? When we all deserved to perish, is it not a most illustrious display of grace, to render the salvation of all even *possible*? God has left nothing undone to secure the salvation of every sinner that could consistently be done. The fountain of life is open and accessible. It is barred by no decree of heaven, by no limitation in the offer, by nothing but man's own voluntary and obstinate refusal to come to the invigorating stream. Only consent to be saved, and both the promise and oath of God render your salvation certain. Your business is not to make an atonement. That is utterly out of the question. The law of God would accept nothing of you short of the actual and literal infliction of the penalty. Its demands, however, have been fully satisfied by Christ, and all that is now required on your part, is to acquiesce in the wonderful expedient, and accept with thankful heart the redemption so freely tendered. What astonishing grace is this! What glorious news to

a world enveloped in gloom and despair! Let him that is athirst come. Let all who desire to be saved, avail themselves of heaven's appointed remedy.

2. How evident it is, from this subject, that if men are not saved, *they are without the shadow of an excuse*. There is no obstacle, as we have seen, in the way of their salvation, but what exists in themselves. On the part of God all things are ready. The ransom has been paid down,—an all-sufficient atonement has been made; a free salvation is offered, and no man who has been truly willing to be saved, saved on the terms of the gospel, has met with repulse and disappointment. If men, then, are not saved, where lies the fault? Who is it that excludes them from pardon, that keeps them from the overflowing fountain of mercy, and that finally bars against them the door of heaven? Who, but themselves, their guilty selves. What, but “an evil heart of unbelief,”—what, but their voluntary and persevering rejection of the offer of the gospel, can prevent their salvation? And can this be urged as an excuse? Does God regard it as such? Does conscience regard it as such? What if men were to make the same plea in other cases? Here, for example, is a man who owes you \$100. Payment is demanded, and he has it in his power at once to meet the claim. The

money is in his pocket, and nothing but his dishonesty hinders him from cancelling the debt. Do you consider his *indisposition* to pay you the money, an excuse for withholding it? Your child has been guilty of an act of disobedience. You expostulate with him, and endeavor to produce in him a spirit of submission and penitence. All your remonstrances, however, prove ineffectual. *He will not yield.* He despises all your counsel, and will none of your reproof. Does the perverseness of that child release him from obligation, or in any measure diminish his guilt? How, then, is it that men dare urge their voluntary rejecting of Christ—their determined hostility to his claims, as any kind of apology before God? What is this but the very essence of their criminality, the very ground of their condemnation? What infinite folly and wickedness to urge that as an excuse which should produce in you only humiliation. How different will this matter present itself should you ever be brought to repentance. With what tears of contrition will you then condemn what you now labor to justify. Then instead of casting reflections upon God, you will take shame and confusion to yourself. Then instead of vindicating yourself, it will be your delight to ascribe righteousness to your Maker.

3. *How bitter will be the reflections of those who are finally lost.* You will have none to blame

for your perdition but yourself. Memory will portray before you the scenes of your past and wasted probation. It will bring to your view the blood that was once shed for your redemption, the repeated offers of mercy that were pressed upon your acceptance; the strivings of the Holy Spirit, the pleadings of faithful ministers; the entreaties of Christian friends, and all those kind and gracious influences that were once exerted to draw you to Christ and heaven. And while you will reflect on the various means that were employed for your salvation, you will also reflect on that perverseness which rendered all those means so utterly unavailing. You will think of your thoughtless inattention; your studied efforts to resist the truth, and oppose the designs of mercy; your unmeaning and criminal excuses, and your continued abuse of that patience which waited upon you during so many long years of sin and impenitence. How torturing will be the emotions which such reflections must awaken. You will feel that you have ruined yourself, that your own hand has perpetrated the horrid deed. You will know that you are lost, not because you could not have been saved, but solely because you rejected the counsel of mercy against your own salvation. Oh! what would you now give were you favored with one more offer of salvation, were the waters of life once more accessible!

But the precious opportunity is now gone, and gone forever. Oh! how dreadful to perish under such circumstances, to perish when you might have been saved.

“ In utter darkness, far
Remote, I beings saw, forlorn in woe,
Burning continually, yet unconsumed,
And there were groans that ended not, and sighs
That always sighed, and tears that ever wept,
And ever fell, but not in mercy's sight ;
And still I heard these wretched beings curse
Almighty God, and curse the Lamb, and curse
The earth, the resurrection morn, and seek,
And ever vainly seek, for utter death ;
And from above the thunders answered still,
' *Ye knew your duty, but ye did it not.*' ”

My dear hearer, let me once more proclaim to you the message of mercy. “ Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” Will you accept the gracious offer? Will you consent to be saved? Can it be possible that there is any occasion to propose such a question? Consent to be saved? Who can refuse to be *saved*? The only question with man, it might be supposed, would be, *Is salvation attainable?* but no,—that is not the question *now*. You *may* be saved, but *will* you? What! not saved? Is there nothing in salvation desirable? nothing in pardon, peace, and holiness desirable? nothing in an eternal weight of glory desirable? If not, then let me ask, is there any

thing in sin desirable? any thing in eternal remorse, quenchless fire, undying agony desirable? My dear hearer, I repeat the question, *Will you be saved?* Will you come to the fountain of life? Will you drink of the stream that flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb? Will you taste the preciousness of redeeming love? shall the cravings of that restless spirit now be satisfied? shall that aching void within you now be filled?

“Why will you be starving and feeding on air?
There’s mercy in Jesus, enough and to spare.
If still you are doubting, make trial and see,
And prove that his mercy is boundless and free.”

SERMON IX.

NAAMAN, THE SYRIAN LEPER, OR PROUD MAN REJECTING A FREE SALVATION.

Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage.—2 KINGS v. 12.

THERE is no situation in life, however elevated and prosperous, that can secure us from the visitations of adversity. The rich and the renowned are as liable to the infirmities and diseases incident to mortality as the poor and the despised.

How strikingly is this exemplified in the case of Naaman, the distinguished character referred to in our text. Notwithstanding his exalted rank and military achievements, he was visited with one of the sorest calamities that can afflict our race. “Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria; he was also a mighty man in valour, *but he was a leper.*”

The providence of God had so ordered that the Syrians had carried captive from the land of Israel

a young female, who was employed to wait on Naaman's wife. Enslaved as she was in a strange country, she would no doubt often revert to her kindred from whom she had been torn, and the distinguished religious privileges which she had once enjoyed. For the recovery of Naaman she seems to have felt a particular solicitude, and having heard of the piety and miracles of the prophet Elisha, she was earnestly desirous that application might be made to him for her master's recovery. "Would God, my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy." This report respecting the prophet having reached Naaman, he resolved to avail himself of the information without delay. The king of Syria kindly interested himself in the case, and addressed a letter to Jehoram, king of Israel, interceding in behalf of Naaman.

With ten talents of silver and six thousand pieces of gold and ten changes of raiment, he proceeded in great state to the king of Israel, who, when he read the letter, construed the request of the king of Syria into blasphemy, and regarded it as a mere pretence for provoking a war. Rending his clothes he said, "Am I a God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? Wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me."

The perplexity and rage of Jehoram having been reported to Elisha, he requested that Naaman might be sent to him, in order that it might be known among the idolatrous Syrians that there was a prophet in Israel, and that Jehovah, unlike the gods of the nations, was abundantly able to heal when all other resources had failed. Having arrived at the prophet's door with his presents, instead of meeting with the attention to which he supposed his rank entitled him, he was simply directed to go and wash in Jordan seven times, with the assurance that he should be clean. At this, Naaman, we are told, "was wroth, and went away and said, Behold, I thought he will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean?"

We have here a most striking illustration of the opposition of man to the gospel method of salvation. Convinced of sin, he inquires, What must I do to be saved? In accordance with their commission, the messengers of God direct the sinner to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. But instead of complying with the requisition, he turns away disappointed, and perhaps manifests

no small degree of displeasure, not only against the conditions of salvation, but also against those who have the faithfulness to enforce them.

I. Let us now endeavor to ascertain *the reasons which induced Naaman to take offence at the direction of the prophet*, and in them behold the causes that lead men, at the present day, to reject the offer of salvation through the atoning blood of a Saviour.

1. The directions of the prophet were *mortifying to Naaman's pride*.

The honorable man came with a view of *purchasing* a cure, whereas he is treated as a mere pensioner. He came expecting great personal attention, but the prophet, instead of appearing himself, simply sends a message to him by a servant. He came expecting that his recovery would be effected by some splendid miracle and imposing ceremony, but he is told only to wash in Jordan seven times, and be healed.

The evident design and tendency of Elisha's directions were to humble the proud man's heart. It was this that provoked his wrath. He viewed himself as treated with neglect and insult. Desirous as he was to be healed, it must be effected in a way that accorded with his superior rank and station.

What a striking illustration have we here of man's opposition to the grace of the gospel. The terms on which God offers salvation to sinners, while they are highly honorable to himself, tend to produce in them the deepest humiliation. So far from encouraging those flattering views which are commonly entertained of human nature, they exhibit it as utterly vile and loathsome. So far from acknowledging any merit on the part of the sinner, they represent his very best deeds as deeds of sin, and declare him justly condemned to eternal death. So far from accepting any price or equivalent for salvation, they offer it to him as the purchase of a Saviour's blood, without money and without price. Instead of coming to God as a claimant, he must come as a suppliant; and if saved, his salvation, from the beginning to the end, must be ascribed, not to himself, but to sovereign grace alone.

No man will consent to be saved on such terms until he is brought to the very dust of humiliation. The lofty notions which he once entertained of his own goodness and merit, must give way to deep conviction of guilt and unworthiness. Renouncing all dependence on himself, he must look to Christ as his sole deliverer, pleading for mercy alone through his all-perfect righteousness. "The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the

haughtiness of man shall be made low ; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day."

Here is the grand reason of man's disaffection to the Gospel. Could he purchase salvation, he might be willing to obtain it at any price. Pilgrimages, penances, austerities of every kind are often submitted to with the utmost readiness ; but to come to Christ as a hell-deserving sinner, to plead the merits of his blood, to rely alone on his grace—what reluctance do we find to be saved on such terms ?

Could I persuade you that I have in my possession the seamless coat of Christ, and that the sight or touch of that coat would impart to you some saving influence, how eager would you be to avail yourself of the privilege. Such an announcement was made a few years since at Treves, a city in Germany, by a Catholic Archbishop. A formal exhibition of that pretended coat was there made in 1844, from the 18th of August to the 6th of October, and a general invitation was given to the faithful to repair to the precious relic. About 500,000, or, according to the statement of some journals, about a million of pilgrims and visitors responded to the call, and with the assurance of a plenary indulgence, the deceived people flocked to behold the old piece of cloth, and returned rejoicing to their homes.

Such credulity and superstition meet with our sincere pity, and our unmeasured condemnation; but the spirit of self-righteousness evinced by those dupes of popish intrigue, is the spirit that pervades the bosom of every unredeemed man. If you cannot be induced to trust to a worn-out garment, you may be trusting to something equally worthless. What are all your supposed virtues but “filthy rags” in the sight of God; and what else have you by which to commend yourself to infinite purity for acceptance and salvation? “What!” says the sinner, “must I give up all dependence on anything I have yet done, anything I can possibly do? Must I confess that I am totally corrupt, and justly condemned? Must I be saved on the same terms as the most abandoned and vile? be justified alone by faith—washed alone in a Saviour’s blood? The stoop is too low; the conditions are too humiliating.”

2. Another cause of Naaman’s displeasure was this—the *proposed method of recovery was contrary to his prescribed plan, his preconceived views.* “Behold,” said he, “I thought he will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper.” He had formed his own notions as to the way in which he was to be cured, and the directions which he received did not at all correspond with his expectations.

Thus men prescribe their own method of salvation. Their early impressions in regard to that method were perhaps entirely erroneous, and are now adhered to with the utmost tenacity. They have been taught and led to believe that spiritual regeneration is a mere dream of enthusiasts, and they can scarcely listen to the doctrine, when faithfully presented, without feeling the force of their long cherished prejudices. Or, if they are convinced of the necessity of such a change, they have prescribed their own way and means by which it is to be effected. Whatever crosses these, at once awakens their hostility. Instead of yielding themselves up to the guidance of God's word and Spirit, they follow their own impulses and inclinations. Instead of submitting to the plan of salvation revealed in the Gospel, they have a plan of their own. If they are ever converted, they are resolved it shall be in a certain way, and in no other. It must be by a certain class of truths, by a certain system of measures, and by a certain process of mind—directly the reverse of those which infinite wisdom may see best to employ to accomplish the great change.

3. The dissatisfaction of Naaman was also excited by *the apprehension that other means than those prescribed by the prophet, might prove equally, and even more effectual.* "Are not," said

he, "Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?" "If I am to be cleansed of the leprosy by the application of water, there is abundance of that in my own country. What is the insignificant stream of the Jordan, compared with our own Abana and Pharpar? Why should that possess any medicinal virtue which does not belong to these? A strange request, indeed! If such are the means by which I am to be cured, Damascus can as well supply them as Israel?"

And why, my hearers, do you not come to Christ that you may have life? Is it not because your confidence is placed somewhere else? One, perhaps, trusts to some external rite; another to a reformation of his conduct; a third to his connection with the visible Church; a fourth to his regular performance of devotional duties. You cannot see why these things may not save you as well as simple faith. You can discover quite as much efficacy in your own righteousness as you can in the perfect righteousness of the Son of God. Why need you trust to the merit of another, when, in your view, you have merit enough of your own?

4. It is probable, too, that Naaman was offended at the *mysteriousness* of the means prescribed. "What! wash in Jordan and be cleansed? Who

ever heard of water curing the leprosy? What possible connection can there be, in this case, between the means and the end? And, then, I am to wash *seven* times. Why will not one plunge suffice? What does the prophet mean?"

"I cannot," says the sinner, "see how simple faith in Christ can save me. The whole plan of redemption through the atonement is to me a perfect mystery." And what if it is? Does that afford any valid reason why you should reject it? Is it necessary that you should perfectly understand the process by which a medicine removes a disease before you can be persuaded to avail yourself of it? Its efficacy is founded not on your knowledge of its operation, but on its adaptation to the nature of the disorder. Admitting that there are mysteries connected with the Gospel scheme of salvation, that scheme we know originated in heaven, and is the fruit of infinite wisdom and benevolence. Upon this scheme thousands, and tens of thousands, have ventured their all, and not in a single instance has there been any failure or disappointment.

II. We have now seen some of the reasons why men are offended at God's plan of redemption; let us next consider why they ought *not* to be offended,

or present some inducements to engage your immediate acceptance of salvation through Christ.

1. My first remark here is this—the method of salvation through the blood of a Redeemer is of *divine appointment*. It is God who says to the sinner “Go wash in the fountain which I have opened and be clean.” The plan of redemption originated in heaven. It is the result of divine counsel and foreknowledge, the fruit of divine wisdom and goodness. Humiliating as it is to man, it is altogether worthy of God. All your objections, therefore, to the terms of the gospel, are virtually implications of the divine character. All the offence you take at the message of his servants, is offence taken at him. If you are dissatisfied with the truth as it is proclaimed by us, you are dissatisfied with him. If you are displeased with us you are displeased with him. It is not optional with us, as the heralds of divine grace, what we shall preach. We have received our commission and instructions, and to them must we faithfully adhere. God forbid that we should know anything among you save Christ, and him crucified.

Would you have God to save you in some other way? Will you set up your own judgment in opposition to his? Will you condemn him that you may justify yourself? Will you take the credit of your salvation to yourself, and tear the crown of glory from the head of the Redeemer? Go, proud

man, and shrink into your own nothingness; go cast yourself, as a guilty rebel, at the feet of offended heaven, and instead of proposing your own conditions of justification, accept with thankfulness those which are presented to you in Christ, and let your glory henceforth be in the bleeding cross alone.

2. The gospel method of salvation also recommends itself to you *by the simple and easy terms on which it makes its proffers*. The servants of Naaman, perceiving his reluctance to comply with the prophet's direction, kindly expostulated with him in the following words: "My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? How much rather, then, when he saith to thee, Wash and be clean?"

They well knew that if their master had been required to submit to some painful operation, to take some nauseous medicine, or to bestow large sums of money in order to obtain a cure, he would unhesitatingly have acceded to the conditions. Why, then, should he object to the simple prescription to wash in Jordan seven times and be healed? The expostulation had the desired effect. Naaman saw his folly, complied with the directions, and was restored.

And if men are willing to do what they regard as some "*great thing*" to obtain salvation—to tor-

ture their bodies, to part with their wealth, to engage in burdensome rites, and even to lay down their lives, why should they not be willing simply to believe and be saved—to look and live—to wash and be clean?

“A person under deep conviction,” (says the late Dr. Bedell,) “once went to a minister of the gospel, from whose lips I received the relation, and placed before him the inquiry of the sinner, ‘What must I do to be saved?’ and at that moment, through the window, his eye rested on an infirm old man, staggering under the weight of a burden evidently beyond his strength to carry. ‘I would carry that burden round the world,’ said the sinner, pointing to the man, ‘if it would only save my soul.’ ‘Yes, I have no doubt you would,’ said the minister, ‘if you could do it, and then go boasting into heaven. But you could not carry that burden round the world, even if salvation was the purchase. God has dealt more mercifully with you than this. You would carry a burden round the world to purchase your salvation, but you will not stoop to the humility of taking it as a free gift at the hands of God.’”

3. I would urge you to avail yourself of God’s plan of redeeming mercy, in view of *its certain efficacy*.

Of Naaman it is recorded that he “went down,

and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God, and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean."

No sooner did he comply with the prophet's direction than his health was restored. How sudden and how happy the change. In a moment his leprosy was gone, and he became a sound and healthy man.

Equally certain is salvation to all who seek it in God's appointed way. Trust in the mighty Saviour, and you shall live. His blood cleanseth from all sin.

"His blood can make the foulest clean,
His blood availed for me."

There is no case, however obstinate, that it cannot reach. Multitudes have already proved its efficacy, and multitudes, yet unborn, are to know its healing virtue. With the fullest confidence you may rely on it, as a never-failing remedy for all your spiritual maladies.

4. And this method of salvation, I may moreover remark, is the *only method*. In the case of Naaman there was no alternative but to wash in Jordan or retain his disease and die. It is so, too, with the sinner. In vain do you look for salvation but in the blood of the cross. As this is a sovereign,

so it is the *only* remedy for sin. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." Come to Christ and you are safe—refuse, and you must perish. There is no other sacrifice for sin—no other name under heaven whereby you can be saved. Not a soul has yet been saved but in this way, and we may be sure that there will be none hereafter. The redeemed will all be indebted to the same blood, the same free and abounding grace. The gospel is a complete *leveller*. I do not say that it annihilates all distinctions among men, but it places all on the same standing before God. It regards all as covered with the same guilt and defilement, and it proclaims to all the same means of pardon and purification.

5. The *urgency of your case* calls for an immediate acceptance of this salvation. Your disease, if not removed, must prove fatal. You are perishing in sin. Your condition is becoming more and more alarming. The horrors of the second death are just before you, and if deliverance be not obtained soon, your doom is sealed forever. Why, then, do you hesitate? Why not consent to be saved on any terms? Why remain a spiritual leper another day? The remedy is at hand; the healing balm is freely offered; the physician of souls stands at your side, asking, "Wilt thou be made whole?" Oh! hasten your application to him, and accept with eagerness his proffered aid.

"To the dear fountain of thy blood,
 Incarnate God ! I fly ;
 Here let me wash my spotted soul,
 From crimes of deepest dye."

REMARKS.

1. And now let me remark, *How wonderful is the change which divine grace effects in the character of man.* How entirely does it overcome all the natural aversion of the human heart to the salvation of the gospel ; and dispose us to ascribe the glory to God alone. The time was when the Christian was just as reluctant to be saved through Christ as other men, when he was possessed of the same spirit of self-righteousness, and when he urged the same objections to God's method of justification ; but now, how changed ! What was once his pride, is now his shame ; what was once an offence and a stumbling block, is now all his salvation and glory.

"Since the dear hour that brought me to thy foot,
 And cut up all my follies by the root,
 I never trusted in an arm but thine,
 Nor hoped but in thy righteousness divine ;
 My prayers and alms, imperfect and defiled,
 Were but the feeble efforts of a child ;
 Cleansed in thine own all-purifying blood,
 Forgive their evil, and accept their good.
 I cast them at thy feet—my only plea,
 Is what it was, dependence upon thee."

These sentiments of the pious Cowper, will find

a most ready response in every believer's heart. "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." "None but Christ, none but Christ."

2. Here, too, we may learn *why it is that men often seek for salvation, but seek in vain*. Like Naaman they have prescribed their own method of cure. They are willing to do every thing, but the right thing. They trust to their past goodness; they trust to their present doings; they trust to their future obedience, but they will not trust in Christ. This spirit of pride and self-righteousness lies deeply buried in every human breast. Men are often under its influence, when they are scarcely conscious of the fact. Not only the careless and stupid, but even the awakened and inquiring are prone to look for salvation in themselves. Here is the grand reason why many seek for rest, but find none. Months, and even years may have been spent in mental anguish, and in fruitless efforts to do, what God has never required them to do, and what the sacrifice of the cross has already done for them.

An Indian and a white man were both awakened under the same sermon. The Indian was soon enabled to rejoice in the hope of salvation, while his white brother remained for a long time in deep distress, and on the borders of despair, but eventually obtained a sense of pardoning mercy.

Some time afterwards, meeting his red brother, he thus addressed him. "How is it that I should be so long under conviction, when you found comfort so soon? "Oh! brother," said the Indian, "me tell you. There come along a rich prince, he promise to give you a new coat, you look at your coat and say, 'I don't know, my coat pretty good, I believe it will do a little longer.' He then give me new coat. I look on my old blanket, I say, this good for nothing. I fling it right away, and take my new coat. Just so brother, you try to make your old righteousness do for some time; you loath to give it up, but I poor Indian had none, and therefore I glad to receive at once the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ."

This simple story presents the true reason why so many moral men are excluded from salvation, while the vilest sinners are made partakers of it; and also the reason why persons in an awakened state of mind often seek for rest, and yet fail to obtain it. In this simple story we have more true theology than can be found in all the Oxford tracts that have ever been published, or all the Puseyite sermons that have ever been preached.

3. One remark more. *If men perish the fault must be their own.* It is not because salvation is not provided, but because it is *rejected*. Malignant as is your disease, and incurable as it is by

man, the gospel proclaims to you a certain remedy, a remedy as free as it is efficacious. The healing balm is offered; it is within your reach; it is pressed upon your acceptance, but it is neglected and despised. You have no idea of being saved in God's way. You complain of it as unreasonable. Rather than accept the remedy he proposes, you prefer to retain your leprosy, and perish. Upon whom, then, can you cast the blame of your perdition! It rests neither upon the Father, nor the Son, nor the Spirit, but upon yourself. You die by your own suicidal hand. You push away from you the only hope of your sin-stricken soul. You dash from your fevered lips the cup of salvation, and go down to the chambers of eternal death, your own destroyer. Now your disease becomes fixed in your moral nature, and incurable. You have entered upon eternity with a character that admits of no change. While every power of your soul will still be in full exercise, all will be in complete ruins, and the elements of depravity left to develop themselves forever. Happy spirits will be advancing in knowledge, holiness, and felicity, while you are doomed to unending sin, despair and misery. The heavens above ring with the notes of the "great multitude," redeemed by a Saviour's blood, while for you is reserved nothing but "weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth. The glorified

throng are eternally ravished with the vision of the Lamb, while you remain a wretched exile from his presence, and the monument of his merited and ever-enduring wrath.

And all this will be the result of your own neglect and folly. You might have been saved, but you would not. The fire continues to burn, the worm to gnaw, and eternity to roll round, while in tones of thunder, the fearful charge falls upon your ear, "Oh ! sinner, thou hast destroyed thyself !"

SERMON X.

REGENERATION AN INSTANTANEOUS CHANGE.

And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God.
LUKE xviii. 43.

THE miracles which our Lord wrought on the body, are strikingly emblematical of the operations of his grace on the soul. The natural blindness of Bartimeus affords a representation of the moral darkness of the unregenerated heart, and the manner in which he applied to Christ for relief, points out the manner in which the sinner is to apply for spiritual illumination. As the recovery of the blind man was instantaneous, so is also the recovery of man from sin to holiness. “*Immediately* he received his sight, &c.”

Regeneration or conversion (for we use the terms as synonymous,) *is an instantaneous change.* This is the doctrine which we now purpose to *explain, establish and apply.*

I. The doctrine requires, in the first place, to be *explained.*

1. I remark here, we must be careful to distinguish between the *beginning* of holiness, and its *progress*. The former we denominate regeneration; the latter, sanctification. Regeneration is instantaneous; sanctification, gradual. The work of religion is a work for life. Grace, once implanted in the soul, is susceptible of continual growth. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." "First appears the blade; then the ear; then the full corn in the ear." The divine life is carried forward gradually, but it never *begins* gradually.

2. We must also distinguish between *conviction* and *conversion*. Conviction, however indispensable to conversion, forms, properly, no part of it. Many who are the subjects of the one, never become the subjects of the other. Conviction may be gradual, and may be protracted for a long period, and it is this fact that has led some to regard regeneration itself as progressive. They refer you to the cases of those who for months, and even for years, have been impressed with the importance of religion, before they have been brought into the light and liberty of the sons of God, and the inference is now drawn, that in such cases there was a gradual transition from a state of nature to a state of grace, until the work of regeneration was fully accomplished.

But it ought to be known, that conviction of sin is not necessarily accompanied with any change of moral character. It may exist in the highest degree, while the heart retains all its natural perverseness, and is excited even to a more determined resistance of the truth. However long, therefore, the sinner may be oppressed with a sense of guilt, or may be deliberating the question of duty, until he yields himself to Christ, and accepts the mercy offered to him in the gospel, so far from growing better, he may all the while be growing worse. No essential change takes place in his character until he casts himself in humble penitence at the foot of the cross, and with unreserved consecration gives himself away to the service and glory of God.

3. It may be important also to remark, that while regeneration itself is instantaneous, *the perception or development of the change may be gradual*. I am aware that there are those who insist that every regenerate man must be able to point out both the moment and the place of his conversion. The Scriptures, however, nowhere represent this as essential. If a man can truly say, "Whereas I was once blind, but now I see," it is a matter of little importance, where, when, or how, the change took place. It may be thought that as regeneration is a transformation so deep and radical, there

can be no difficulty in always determining the very instant when the change is produced. There would be no difficulty if we could always distinguish our spiritual exercises. It cannot, however, be questioned that many, in consequence of their imperfect knowledge of the proper evidences of piety, the fear of self-deception, or the influence of temptation, are kept in suspense in regard to their conversion, who, notwithstanding, have actually passed from death unto life. The assurance of our personal salvation is, by no means, essential to the existence of evangelical faith. Such assurance is, unquestionably, desirable, and should be regarded as an attainable privilege; and yet there may be genuine piety, mingled with most painful heart searchings, and much doubt as to our actual acceptance with God. "The sun may come up behind clouds; it may not shine out till noon, nor even until its going down. A disease may pass its crisis, and for hours and days, one may not be conscious of it."

II. With these explanations or qualifications, we now proceed to the *proofs* of our doctrine; namely, that regeneration or conversion is, in all cases, an instantaneous change.

1. The very *terms* which are employed in the Scriptures to express the change, convey to us the idea of instantaneousness.

It is denominated *Regeneration*; or, a new birth. Now, if men are born again, there must be a time when the transition takes place. Should we apply the term to the progress of divine grace in the Christian's heart, then every day he would be born anew. This would be about as consistent as to call our advancement from childhood to youth, and from youth to manhood, a new birth.

The change is sometimes designated as a *new creation*. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." To create, properly signifies to cause that to exist which did not before exist. There can be no point of time between existence and non-existence. When God said, "Let there be light," instantly there was light; and just as instantaneous is the communication of spiritual light to those who are in spiritual darkness. "God who commanded the light, to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts." 2 Cor. iv. 6.

This change is also denominated a *resurrection* or *quickenings*. "If ye then be *risen* with Christ, seek those things which are above." "You hath he *quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and in sins." There can be no medium between life and death. A man must either be dead or alive. Equally obvious is it, that every moral and accountable being must either be spiritually dead or alive; and that there must have been an instant when the believer "passed from death unto life."

Conversion is called a *new heart*. The heart is new when its governing purpose and prevailing affections are radically changed. Now, as a man cannot have two objects of supreme choice or affection at the same time, the renewal of the heart, whenever it takes place, must, from the nature of the case, transpire at a definite moment.

2. That conversion is an instantaneous change, will also appear from *the divine requirements*. "To-day," saith the Holy Ghost, "if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." "God *now* commandeth all men everywhere to repent." "Acquaint *now* thyself with him, and be at peace." "Behold *now* is the accepted time; behold *now* is the day of salvation."

In every passage where the duty of repentance, of faith, or any other exercise of a renewed heart is enjoined, the obligation to immediate compliance is always expressed or implied. Nowhere does God grant to the sinner license to defer his duty a single moment.

Now, if God demands instantaneous conversion, it is evident that such a conversion is practicable. Should it require any considerable time for men to embrace the gospel, it would hardly be enjoined upon them as a *present* duty. This would be requiring them to do what is absolutely impossible in the very nature of the case.

3. The doctrine of instantaneous regeneration may also be proved from the doctrine of *total depravity*.

The heart of man by nature is utterly destitute of holiness, and under the entire dominion of sin. "The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God." In this respect, the hearts of all the fallen descendants of Adam are fashioned alike. There is no more moral goodness in one than in another. We may differ greatly in our natural dispositions, and in our external conduct, but we are all equally void of love to God, or conformity to his law. All holiness is the fruit of divine grace; and if ever men become holy, there must be a time when they *begin* to be so. The *beginning* of a thing must always be instantaneous. The very first exercise of holy affections, is proof of a radical change of character—of the renewing of the Holy Ghost.

We see not how this conclusion can be avoided by those who admit the scriptural doctrine of human depravity; and I think it will be found, that wherever the instantaneousness of regeneration is ignored, there is also a denial of man's total sinfulness. The idea then is, that human nature, though degenerate, still possesses some remains of moral goodness, and that this remaining germ has only to be cultivated or matured, and man is thus

brought again to fellowship with God. But the Scriptures recognize no such germ in the unrenewed heart. They teach us, on the other hand, that "the heart of the sons of men is full of evil," "desperately wicked," "alienated from the life of God;" and from this it must clearly follow, that regeneration is not the improvement or development of a character already existing, but the production of a character altogether new.

4. As another confirmation of our doctrine, we now remark, *Man can evidently sustain no neutral character.* As we are all responsible subjects of the divine government, we must necessarily possess some character—a character decidedly good or evil. "He that is not with me," says Jesus, "is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." "No man can serve two masters." "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." Here we are plainly taught that every man must be either the friend or the enemy of God, the servant of God or the servant of sin.

The Scriptures uniformly divide mankind into two classes—the righteous and the wicked—the godly and the ungodly—the holy and the sinful. This distinction clearly implies that there can be no instant of time in which a man is destitute of all moral character—neither a saint nor a sinner, neither a believer nor an unbeliever, neither penitent nor impenitent.

Now, if regeneration be a gradual change, I would ask, what character does the man sustain who is neither regenerate nor unregenerate, or, who during a protracted period, is passing through the process of regeneration? Is he holy or sinful? Indifferent he cannot be. Should it be said, that the work of holiness has *commenced*, then, I maintain, he is already regenerated. The transition from a state of nature to a state of grace has manifestly taken place. If, on the other hand, he is yet destitute of holiness, then he must be alienated from God, whatever may be his anxiety in reference to his personal salvation.

5. I now remark—*the very nature of regeneration* shows that it must be instantaneous.

Regeneration is a change of heart—a change from sin to holiness, from wrong to right affections, evincing itself, of course, in a corresponding change of conduct.

It is a change *from enmity to love*. Man by nature is the enemy of God; by grace he becomes his friend. Now the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost. “He that loveth is born of God.”

It is easy to see that this change from enmity to love is not gradual, but instantaneous. However long and deeply the mind may be impressed with the obligation to love God, and the criminality of hating him, whenever the feelings, in reference

to the divine character, are changed, there must be an instant when the change takes place.

So, too, in regard to the exercise of *submission*. This is the opposite of rebellion. As ambassadors of Christ, we are commissioned to beseech men to become reconciled to God. The termination of the contest which man maintains with God must be instantaneous; for there can be no point of time when his position, in reference to the divine government, can be a neutral one.

Repentance is another exercise of a regenerated heart, but it is obvious that there can be no state of the mind in which it is neither penitent nor impenitent.

Another fruit of regeneration is *faith*. Every man, however, must be a believer or an unbeliever. If there is a state in which a man is neither, what is that state? and what is the position he occupies in reference to the demands of the Gospel?

In regeneration the natural *selfishness* of the heart gives place to *holy benevolence*. The subject of this change instead of living supremely for himself, henceforth lives wholly for God. This transition, also, must be instantaneous; otherwise there is a state in which a man is neither supremely selfish nor supremely benevolent; in other words, in which he has no moral character, and has ceased to be responsible.

6. We remark further:—Regeneration must be just as instantaneous as *forgiveness*.

Every man must either be forgiven or unforgiven. Any medium state would imply that he is neither an object of the divine favor, nor of the divine displeasure, neither redeemed from the curse of the law, nor yet exposed to that curse. Such a supposition must be wholly inadmissible. If a sinner is pardoned instantly, then he must be converted instantly; for the former is the immediate and invariable consequence of the latter.

“ *The moment* a sinner believes
And trusts in a crucified God,
A pardon *at once* he receives,
Redemption in full through his blood.”

Let us suppose the process of regeneration to occupy only a single week. The question occurs, what relation does the individual, during that period, sustain to the penalty of sin? Is that penalty remitted? Then he must be converted; for God never pardons the sinner while yet unconverted. Is the sinner yet *unpardoned*? Then it is obvious he must yet be unconverted. Is he neither pardoned nor unpardoned? No human being can occupy such a position. And what if he were to die in that state—would he enter heaven or hell? There is certainly no middle place allotted for those whose characters are indif-

ferent—neither holy nor sinful. There are but two ways—sin and holiness; and but two ends—life and destruction. Every one in this assembly is now walking in one of these ways, and were he to die this moment, would rise to the regions of bliss or sink to the depths of woe.

7. If we now refer to *the cases of conversion recorded in the Scriptures*, we shall find that they were remarkable for their suddenness. It was so with the *three thousand* on the day of Pentecost. These were all converted during that single day, and, probably, in the course of a few hours.

The conversion of the *jailor* and his household took place on that very night when they were awakened.

Saul of Tarsus yielded himself to Christ the moment he fell to the earth, and cried out, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” Whatever may have been his state on the three succeeding days, there can be no question that his conviction and conversion were simultaneous.

Salvation came to *Zaccheus* on the same day that he first beheld the Son of God, and welcomed him to his house.

The heart of *Lydia* was opened to attend to the things pertaining to her eternal peace, while she listened to the gospel from the lips of God’s messengers.

The *dying malefactor*, from a hardened impenitent, suddenly became an humble believer, and from his cross of ignominy ascended to the celestial paradise.

Protracted convictions in the days of the Apostles seem to have been rare. Those who embraced the gospel, commonly embraced it on the spot. Under the same discourse men were both awakened and converted. When the truth had been fairly presented, they were called upon instantly to embrace it, and under its fervent appeals they usually yielded an instant compliance with its claims, or set themselves in the attitude of determined resistance.

Here, let it be remembered, that conversion is the same now that it was then. The change itself is the same, and it is effected by the same means. The miracles which were sometimes wrought in attestation of the truth, might produce conviction, but it was the truth, not the miracle, which accomplished the work of conversion.

It is no uncommon thing at the present day, particularly during times of special religious interest, for conversions to take place very suddenly. We have known instances in which the same sermon has proved the means both of the sinner's awakening and conversion. The moment he has been brought to feel his need of a Saviour, he has

received him. And such conversions have also proved genuine and permanent. Indeed, so far from regarding the suddenness of a man's conversion as unfavorable, it ought rather to be regarded as the reverse. How long, I would ask, is it necessary for a sinner to hesitate, to linger, and to grieve the Holy Spirit, in order to insure the genuineness of his conversion? The sooner he yields to his convictions of truth and duty, the better. Nothing can be gained by delay but increased difficulty, and more aggravated guilt.

8. I may yet remark : With the doctrine of this discourse, *accord the common sentiments of men.* Whatever objections they may be disposed to urge against instantaneous conversions, it is evident that their prejudice against such conversions exist, *only when they take place under certain circumstances.* Let some thoughtless one, now in this assembly, aroused to a sense of his peril, resolve at once to flee to Christ for refuge, and by some he might be regarded as altogether too hasty ; but let the same individual on a bed of death profess to be converted, just as hastily, and it may then be all right. You must not, under these circumstances, question the reality of the change, or entertain the least doubt as to the future happiness of the penitent, after his decease. To do so would be uncharitable indeed.

There are multitudes who are kept from immediate repentance, under the delusive hope that they will repent at the close of life. If they have no confidence in sudden conversions while men are in health, they have when men are brought on beds of sickness and death. They sometimes tell us that all they want is, but a few moments to call for mercy, and God will surely not fail to regard their cries.

And the same hopes they thus cherish for themselves, they also cherish for others. As ministers of the gospel we are often sent for to visit the dying, whose preparation for eternity is now crowded into the short period of a few days or hours. Suppose, that, as we approach them under these deeply affecting circumstances, and hear from their lips the anxious inquiry, "What must we do to be saved?" we were to reply in language like the following: "My friend, it is now too late to ask that question; regeneration is a gradual change. You cannot be converted in an hour or a day. It requires time to deliberate about the matter. It is needless, therefore, I am sorry to say, to attempt an answer to your inquiry at this late period, or even to offer up one prayer for your salvation. Your perdition is sealed without any possibility of change."

What would you think of such instruction?

Would it be right? Surely not. You believe that men may be converted suddenly when sick, but not when in health—on a bed of death, but not in the sanctuary of God. Is there no inconsistency here?

We confess that we have but little confidence in death-bed conversions; not because a sinner may not be changed in a moment, but because he is then peculiarly liable to embrace a false hope, or he may already have passed the boundary line of God's patience and mercy. But if men can be converted instantly on the borders of the grave, then, surely, they may be converted thus surrounded by all the privileges of God's house, and the powerful influences of a religious revival. It is well known that no class of men are commonly more opposed to instantaneous conversions, than those who hold to that figment of superstition, baptismal regeneration. With religious revivals they have not the least sympathy, but denounce them as the fruit of folly and extravagance. They cannot conceive how such numbers can, in so short a time, be transformed in their character, and thus become the disciples of Jesus, and the heirs of salvation. And yet there is no class of persons who, in a certain view, are more zealous advocates of instantaneous regeneration than these. The mere application of a few drops of water to the body, by one

in the apostolic succession, is instantly followed, they tell us, by an essential change in the moral condition of the subject. Then the germ of grace is planted ; then the process of redemption begins ; a child of wrath becomes a child of God, and an heir of glory ! Here is instantaneous regeneration with a witness ; and yet absurd as is the notion, it has its advocates among men of whom a better theology might be expected.

The subject before us is one of great practical importance. *Let it lead the church to pray and labor for immediate conversions.* There is often a great mistake here. The efforts that are put forth relate far more to the *prospective* than to the *present* conversion of the impenitent. The evil prevails in the pulpit, in the Sabbath-school, and in the family. But little effort is made to bring the truth to bear *directly* on the heart, and but little expectation is entertained of immediate results. There are those who seem to think it their business only to *sow* and never to *reap*. They content themselves with the hope that if they witness no fruit now they may hereafter.

The same error prevails in *prayer*. We pray for the conversion of sinners at some future day, but hardly expect that it will take place at the moment. There are but few Christians who, in

their prayers, appear to feel that the impenitent can and ought to be converted on the spot.

Now, this is all wrong. It is founded on false views of the nature of conversion, and it is fostering hopes that may never be realized. While we are looking forward to the future to witness the results of our prayers and efforts, death may suddenly summon the sinner away to the judgment, or God may say to him, "He is joined to his idols, let him alone."

To those in this house who are yet unregenerate, this subject is invested with peculiar interest. It calls upon you at once to yield yourselves to the claims of the gospel, and exposes the utter folly of all those pleas by which you may have been accustomed to justify your delay. God demands immediate submission—immediate repentance—immediate faith. "Choose ye this day whom you will serve."

And what is there to hinder you from instantly complying with the call of heaven? Are you afraid that you will act too precipitately? What, can you return from your wanderings too soon? yield your unreasonable warfare with God too soon? rejoice in a sense of pardoning love too soon? "How long halt ye between two opinions?" Are not all things now ready? Is not God waiting to be gracious? Does not the Spirit now

strive? Is not prayer for your conversion now ascending? What, then, wait you for? For more light, more conviction, more feeling, more preparation? Come to Christ just as you are. Cry with Bartimeus, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy upon me," and he who pitied the poor blind beggar will look with pity upon you. Only believe, and thou shalt see the salvation of God.

SERMON XI.

FAITH DEFINED AND ILLUSTRATED.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.—HEBREWS, xi. 1.

A better definition of faith than this could not be given. It is clear, concise, and comprehensive. It is the only definition of that important grace with which the Bible furnishes us. It is given by one who not only lived under its influence, and who had, therefore, become experimentally acquainted with its nature, but who was also divinely inspired to write on this subject. The definition relates to faith *in general*, or in its most comprehensive sense, and not to that particular exercise which fixes itself upon Christ as an atoning Saviour, and which constitutes the grand principle of the sinner's justification. Faith, however, is ever the same mental operation. It may have respect to different objects, but in its nature it is identical, notwithstanding its specific varieties.

Theologians sometimes speak of historical faith, temporary faith, and saving faith. There is, however, but one kind of faith which is acceptable to

God, and that is distinguished as “the faith of his *elect*”—a faith which belongs to the heart no less than to the understanding—a faith experimental, practical and influential.

It is to the nature and the effects of this faith, as exhibited by the Apostle in the text, that we now invite your special attention.

I. Faith, in the first place, is defined to be *the substance of things hoped for*. The marginal reading is, *ground or confidence*. The word here translated *substance* occurs but in four other passages of the New Testament, in three of which it is rendered *confidence* or *confident*, (2 Cor. ix. 4—xi. 17; Heb. iii. 14,) and in the other, (Heb. i. 3,) *person*. The word properly means something substantial or real, in opposition to something imaginary or deceptive. The idea of the Apostle evidently is, that faith renders to the mind the objects of our anticipation or hope, real or substantial, as distinguished from those that are visionary and delusive. It does not, indeed, *create* those objects, yet it imparts to them, in our view, as real a subsistence as if they were actually in our possession, or were objects of vision. We act just as though we *saw* them. They have upon us all the force of reality.

To illustrate this. I hold in my hand a note from a man promising to pay me the sum of one hun-

dred dollars at a certain date. That note is to me "the substance of things hoped for." I feel as fully persuaded that the money will be mine as if I actually held it in possession, and this assurance is founded on the pledge of my friend. I fully believe that he will meet his engagement and fulfill his contract. The note is to me of as much value as so much money. It was given to me in good faith, and I carefully preserve it, with the certain expectation that when it becomes due it will be paid.

So I open my Bible and read—"This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." This promise is made to me by the God of truth. On this I rely with implicit confidence. It relates, indeed, to something *future*. I do not see heaven; I have not yet entered heaven, and yet I feel assured, not only of the existence of that happy world, but that in due time I shall be received there as my eternal home. This confidence is founded upon the promise of God. I know that he cannot deceive or disappoint me. His power is infinite—his word is eternal truth.

"His every word of grace is strong,
As that which built the skies;
The voice that rolls the stars along
Speaks all the promises."

Whatever uncertainty may attend the fulfillment of other engagements, the promise of God cannot fail. Thus I have already “the substance of things hoped for.” Heaven appears as real to me as though I were already there. It is no dream of the imagination—no picture of the fancy—no illusion of the senses, but sober and blessed reality.

So, too, I read in the same book, “Ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened.” Here I have a most encouraging promise to prayer. The blessings promised are yet regarded in anticipation. I have not already received them, but I go to God with the full confidence that they will be granted. Of this I feel as firmly persuaded as if I already possessed them. The only question to be determined is, What has God engaged to give? If I can ascertain this, then I may rest assured it shall be mine. For example, he has said, “This is the will of God, even your sanctification.” On this assurance it is both my duty and privilege to rely. In faith I now draw nigh to him, and plead, “Create in me, O God, a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me,” and I realize that the blessing is as certainly mine, as if I had already received it.

Again, I kneel down, and plead for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the conversion of sinners, and the extension of the Saviour’s kingdom; and

relying with full confidence on the divine promise, I feel persuaded that the blessing will come—that however long it may be delayed, in his own time, and in his own way, the hearer of prayer will certainly grant me my request. “Blessed is she that believed, for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her of the Lord.”—Luke i. 45.

We do not suppose that believers are now favored with any *immediate* revelations; and yet there are instances in which their faith has risen to such a height, as to impart to their minds an almost undoubted persuasion that the specific objects of their prayers would be granted. In this there is nothing strange or visionary. It is the natural and legitimate result of a vigorous faith in the promises of God; and did we live in more intimate communion with him, we should, doubtless, be far more frequently favored with this happy experience. Let me state to you a case illustrative of this point.

Some years since, there was a widow living in New Jersey, who was the mother of four children. For the salvation of her offspring, she was in the practice of observing days of private fasting and prayer. In conversation with a friend, she one day remarked in reference to the youngest, “Ashbel will be a minister of the Gospel.” This she

firmly believed, and she educated him under that belief. Soon after this, the lad was brought home from school dangerously sick. It was supposed that he could not live, but the mother calmly remarked, "I wish to do all in my power to relieve him, but I have not the least fear that he will die." Her confidence was in a prayer-hearing God. The son recovered, and the mother's subsequent conduct, for a series of years, fully evinced that her faith was to her "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

She carried him through all his preparatory studies, and sent him to Princeton College for the express purpose of preparing him for the ministry, though all this time he was a thoughtless, impenitent youth.

Just before he graduated, he wrote home to his mother to know what he should do with his room furniture. She wrote to him to leave it in the care of some friend in Princeton. She intended and expected to send him back to the Seminary. The son complied with her request, and returned home, without the least thought or desire, on his part, to become a minister of the Gospel. This was a matter entirely between his mother and her God.

Soon after, the place where they resided was visited by a revival of religion. All the children

of this believing woman were hopefully converted, and this son among the rest. In due time he entered Princeton Seminary, and found use for his college-room furniture, in accordance with the faith and expectation of his mother. He finished his theological course, entered the ministry, and became an acceptable preacher of the Gospel.

In this instance, it seems as though God actually said, "O woman! great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

II. We come now to the second clause in the Apostle's definition of faith. Faith, he says, is "*the evidence of things not seen.*"

Faith properly relates to things *unseen*, and is thus distinguished from sight. "We walk by faith, not by sight." Faith occupies the place of sight, and affords the same conviction of the reality of things as though they were objects of vision. It so completely demonstrates the existence or truth of those things that they exert upon us all the influence of objects that come within the range of the senses. How do you know that there is such a place as Jerusalem? You have never, perhaps, been there, and yet you entertain no more doubt of its actual existence than if you had seen the place with your own eyes. How do you know that there was such a person as Napoleon Bona-

parte? You may never have seen the Emperor, and yet you are as fully persuaded that there was such a man as though you had been with him in all his campaigns, or had beheld him passing through the streets of Paris. Why have such numbers been induced to flock to the gold mines of California? They had never seen those mines, and yet they no more questioned their existence than if they had actually dug from them the precious ore. In all these cases the evidence is the evidence of faith—evidence founded on credible testimony. It is just so in regard to the invisible realities revealed to us in the word of God. With these realities we become acquainted only by testimony, and that testimony being regarded as unquestionable, we have the same conviction of the truth of the things under consideration, as we should have were they presented to our bodily senses.

This may be illustrated by a few particulars.

It is by faith we are persuaded of *the creation of the world by divine power*. “Through faith,” says the Apostle, “we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God; so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.”—v. 3. How do I know that God created the world? That it exists I have the evidence of my senses; but how came it to exist? “Where

wast thou when he laid the foundations of the earth?" Long before we had a being, the mighty God "spake and it was done; he commanded and it stood fast;" he said, "Let there be light; and there was light." All this I believe on *credible testimony*. I cannot comprehend *how* the world was called into being. The creation of something out of nothing is to me a perfect mystery. Yet the world exists. How came it to exist? Was it eternal? Did it create itself? Did it come into being by "the fortuitous concourse of atoms?" None of these theories satisfy me. How, then, shall I be relieved of my perplexity? Divine revelation alone can solve the problem. Here I am assured that "he who made all things is God." This testimony is to me sufficient. All my difficulties now vanish, and I as certainly know that this world was called into existence by the Almighty energy, as I could be had I been present to witness the sublime spectacle, and, with "the morning stars," extol the wondrous display of divine wisdom and power.

Again: *Faith imparts to the mind evidence of God's existence*. Is there a God, a Supreme intelligence, an Almighty ruler of the universe? No question can be conceived of higher moment than this. It lies at the foundation of all religion. Of the divine existence I entertain no doubt. But why do I believe that there is a God? I may strive

by various metaphysical arguments to demonstrate his being. I may show that he *is* from what he *does*, tracing the effect to the cause—the design to the designer. All this may be strictly logical, and may not be without its force and its use. The mere deductions of human reason, however, can never fully satisfy the mind of man, darkened as are its perceptions by sin, as to the reality of the divine existence. The Pagan world with all their wisdom knew not God. “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image like unto corruptible man.” In his condescension, God has made himself known in his *word*. To the light of nature, he has added the light of revelation. He has proclaimed both his existence and his perfections. “No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” On this sure testimony I now rely. The divine existence now appears as a reality. I am as fully convinced of that existence as I am of my own. I feel that I am surrounded with the divine immensity, and that all things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

“Faith lends its realizing light,
The clouds disperse, the shadows fly,
The invisible appears in sight,
And God is seen by mortal eye.”

It is by faith, also, that we obtain *the evidence of our pardon and acceptance with God*. That it is our privilege to enjoy such evidence, I will not now stop to prove; but upon what does that evidence rest? Upon dreams and visions? upon sounds and sights? upon immediate revelations and suggestions? We claim nothing of the kind. No voice has assured us of forgiveness. No messenger from heaven has communicated to us the fact; and yet we feel persuaded, that, guilty as we are, all our transgressions are, through the blood of Christ, graciously remitted. Upon what, then, is this assurance based? Upon the simple testimony of God's word. I take up that word and read, "Repent and be converted, and your sins shall be blotted out. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." With these conditions I have the consciousness that I have complied, and hence I feel the same confidence that I am pardoned and accepted of God, as I would were I to hear his voice saying to me, "I, even I, have blotted out thy transgressions."

Faith assures us of the existence of a future state. The arguments in proof of such a state, derived from the nature of the human soul, the moral

government of God, and the general conviction and consent of mankind, are not, indeed, to be disparaged. Upon the generality of men, however, they would, aside from divine revelation, produce but a very feeble impression. Even to those who are most capable of appreciating them, they are far from being satisfactory. The wisest Pagan philosophers regarded a future existence more as an object of desire than of absolute assurance. There are difficulties connected with all the arguments on this subject, deduced from human reason, which nothing but divine revelation can remove. The gospel alone has "brought life and immortality to light." Here I am assured that while "the dust returns to the earth, as it was, the spirit returns to God who gave it." The only question to be decided is—Is this book true? Is it what it claims to be, the word of God, a revelation from heaven? That point, I believe, is established by evidence the most conclusive. Well, that book teaches me "*that after death is the judgment.*" It assures me that there is both a heaven and a hell. Faith now becomes to me "the evidence of things not seen." The clouds that rest upon my future prospects all vanish. Eternity appears to me not as a dream, but as a reality. The thousands who have passed away from this state of probation, I believe are all this moment in a state of conscious

existence—are all this moment in happiness or misery. I look up, and behold there an innumerable company, rejoicing in the life-giving presence of God and the Lamb. I look down, and I see there multitudes who lived and died unredeemed, who are now victims of eternal remorse and despair. I now feel that I must soon enter the world of spirits myself. Believing, as I do, that I am one of God's redeemed people, I see laid up for me a crown of glory that fadeth not away. The swelling flood lies before me, separating me from my blissful home. But I look not at that; I look beyond it; I look to the land of promise; I look to the fields of pleasure in the paradise of God; I look to the river of life that flows from the eternal throne, and I expect in a little while to enjoy all that God has promised me, to be freed from sin and sorrow, to mingle with the society of the holy and the blessed, and to be exalted to the highest perfection and bliss in the kingdom of my Father forever. It is in prospect of this felicity that I now endure the cross, and despise the shame; for "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

But this is not all. The same faith that produces in my mind the conviction that there is a heaven, produces also the conviction that there is

a *hell*. I have seen neither. I have never beheld the redeemed in glory, nor the lost in despair; yet on the simple testimony of God's word, I am persuaded that they are there. It is not necessary that a spirit should come from the dead, and assure me that there is a world of torment. God has said it, and that is enough. Relying on the declaration, "the wicked shall be turned into hell," the future misery of all who have left this world impenitent and unpardoned, now becomes, in my view, an awful fact. It is not mere theory with me—not a mere notion of the head—not a cold, unfeeling assent to the doctrine of future punishment. No—it is a living, influential faith. The pit lies fully open before me. I behold its lurid flames. I hear the shrieks of the doomed, and as I behold one and another, plunging into the fearful abyss, my heart is moved within me, and in the agony of prayer I cry, "Save, O God, save the souls that are perishing in sin!" I look upon the world in the light of eternity. I behold the short course of the sinner's triumph terminating in eternal and unmingled wretchedness. Every where I see men in vast crowds pressing on to destruction. Among my own kindred I see those who are yet children of wrath, and heirs of perdition. My soul is convulsed within me, and had I a thousand lives, I feel that I could sacrifice them

all, could I but be the instrument of their salvation.

“ My God I feel the mournful scene,
My bowels yearn o’er dying men ;
And fain my pity would reclaim,
And snatch the fire-brands from the flame.”

We may also consider this faith in reference to *the final triumph and extension of the Saviour’s kingdom*. The world, at present, may be regarded as a moral wilderness, over which Christian sympathy may well pour forth her tears of anguish. How many nations are yet enveloped in midnight darkness, ignorant of the only true God, and degraded by the most abominable systems and practices. Even where the light of Christianity has penetrated, that light, in many places, has been almost entirely obscured by the clouds of ignorance and error ; and instead of the pure and benign religion of the cross, we behold but little else than unmeaning forms and ceremonies. The way of life is indeed narrow, and few there be that find it. Shall this state of things continue always ? Is our world never to be disenthralled from the bondage of sin, and set into the glorious liberty of the sons of God ? I firmly believe that a brighter and better day is at hand—a day in which God will make bare his arm among all nations, and all flesh shall see his salvation—a day in which every

form of error, superstition, oppression and iniquity shall cease, and in which "the truth as it is in Jesus," shall everywhere prove triumphant. Upon what does my assurance rest? Upon external aspects? Upon "the signs of the times?" To these I may not be inattentive. With joy I may hail every indication of advance and improvement; but my confidence is based not on events prosperous or adverse—appearances favorable or unfavorable; it rests *on the word of God*. The mouth of the Lord hath said it, and he will do it. He has promised to his Son "the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession." Here, then, I take my stand. All around me may be darkness. The nations may be convulsed—truth may be crushed—the lips of the witnesses may be silenced—the blood of martyrs may flow—iniquity may every where abound; even the Church may fall into a state of criminal apathy. But few may be "grieved for the affliction of Joseph," or manifest any becoming solicitude for the cause of God. Some in whom we once trusted, may disappoint our hopes, and return to the world; the love of many may wax cold, and truth and righteousness may appear to have almost perished from the earth. Still, faith discerns the approach of better times. It looks away from man; it looks away from the world, and even from

the church, and fixes its eye alone upon God, upon his Almighty power, his immutable purpose, his gracious promise, and it says, "It shall be done. With him all things are possible. He can work and nothing hinder. His word is eternal truth. The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge."

Such is the nature, such the effect of faith. No principle is more powerful. It has done what nothing else can do. It has prompted to efforts the most vigorous; it has led to sacrifices the most noble; it has triumphed over opposition the most formidable; it has overcome difficulties apparently insurmountable; it has endured hardships and sufferings which to feeble humanity would have been utterly intolerable. We read of those who "through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again; and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. And others had trial of cruel mockings, and scourging, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the

sword, they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented (of whom the world was not worthy) ; they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens, and caves of the earth." Heb. xi. 33-36.

And what faith did for these ancient worthies, it can do still. Behold the Christian oppressed with accumulated afflictions and trials, sorrowful, yet always rejoicing ; perplexed, but not in despair ; cast down, but not destroyed ; groaning, yet not complaining ; calmly and patiently resigning himself to the divine will, and exclaiming, "It is the Lord, let him do as seemeth him good." And what is the secret of all this ? It is *faith*.

"His hand, the good man fastens to the skies,
Then bids earth roll, nor feels her idle whirl."

At length he enters upon his conflict with the last enemy. His flesh and his heart fail. The world recedes and disappears from his view. Weeping friends watch with unutterable emotions the last flickering of life—a boundless eternity opens upon his prospect—but even here he triumphs. The sting of death is gone, the future is irradiated with glory, and with the certain expectation of rising from his couch of languishing and suffering to life and bliss, he calmly yields himself to heaven's summons. And how is it that he thus conquers ? The answer again is—*by faith*.

“Faith builds a bridge across the gulf of death ;
Death’s terrors is the mountain faith removes.”

The highest source of evidence to man is faith. There is the evidence of *sense* — the evidence of *reason* ; but superior to both is the evidence of *faith*. I say *superior*, because it extends far beyond them ; it reaches forward to futurity ; it unveils to our view a new world, and realizes objects and events which are connected with man’s most sacred interests. Faith in the divine testimony also affords a surer test of character. It displays a far higher degree of virtue than reliance upon mere external manifestations ; and is, therefore, better adapted to our present circumstances as creatures in a state of probation and discipline. Infidels may call this confidence in the word of God, credulity and superstition ; yet nothing can be more rational. Faith is not opposed to reason, but where reason ends, there faith comes to our help. Believing a thing to be true, does not, indeed, make it true ; yet when a thing is once established by credible testimony, it is just as unreasonable to doubt its truth, supported as it is by such testimony, as it would be to credit it *without* that testimony. A child relying with confidence upon the testimony of its father, has the same conviction of the truth of the promise as if it had already been fulfilled. Men act with as much

promptness and assurance upon the testimony of each other, as they do in view of the evidence of their senses, or the clearest demonstration. Our secular business is carried on, to a great extent, on the principle of credit. Our ordinary intercourse is regulated in a great measure by faith. Let men once cease to have confidence in each other, and all social intercourse is at an end. And why should not the same principle be carried into religion? Why should we be more ready to credit the testimony of man, than to credit the testimony of God? On whose word can we rely if not on his? To the Christian, even the deductions of reason, the evidence of sight, or the most sacred pledges of his fellow-men, cannot carry with them the conviction which results from the word of the living God. He has never seen heaven — never seen hell — never seen the Saviour — never seen the dead bursting from the tomb; or the Judge seated upon his throne; yet the revelation which God has made of these things, establishes their reality without a single question.

Let me now inquire, my hearers, *Have you all this faith?* I ask not whether you *assent* to the truths of the Bible. I ask not whether you *profess* to have embraced these truths; but I ask, do they exert upon you their legitimate influence? Do you live as “seeing him who is invisible?” Do

you rejoice in an unseen Saviour? Do you act as though heaven and hell were realities? Can you adopt the language of the Apostle, "We walk by faith, not by sight. The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God. We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal?"

A man believes the declarations of the Bible no farther than he is *affected* by them; and if this be the proper test of faith, where is it to be found? Where in the church—where in the world? Were some one now to inform you that your dwelling is on fire, you would act in the case just according to the confidence you placed in the testimony. If that testimony were wholly discredited, it would, of course, leave you unmoved. If you regarded it as doubtful, it might awaken some degree of solicitude, but would probably prompt to no decided action. No sooner, however, do you give it your full credence, than you are thrilled with emotion, and hasten to save your property. Why, then, my hearer, are you not affected by the declarations of God respecting the doom of the impenitent? Why, when he has said that "upon the wicked he will rain snares, fire, and brimstone," are you not alarmed? Why are not all in this house, who are

yet without hope in Christ, crying out with one voice, "What must we do to be saved?" Your security is the result of your unbelief. You do not seriously credit the warnings of the Almighty. You do not believe that he is in earnest. You hope, in some way, to escape his threatened judgments. It is this unbelief that will prove your ruin. It blinds you to your danger, and leads you to repose in imagined security until the day of reprieve closes, and your "destruction comes like a whirlwind."

Will you now believe? Why not? Is not God entitled to your confidence? Do you ask for another revelation? Will you wait until the great realities of eternity are presented to you in actual vision? Will you wait until you see the Son of God coming in the clouds of heaven, and hear the blast of the Archangel's trumpet summoning you to judgment? Must you see the Saviour on the cross? Must you be assured by an audible voice of his power and willingness to save? Away now with your unbelief and doubts. If you receive the witness of man, the witness of God is greater. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth upon him."

SERMON XII.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN DIVINE AND HUMAN AGENCY IN THE WORK OF SALVATION.

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.—PHILIPPIANS, ii. 12, 13.

OF all the primitive churches, none appear to have been in a state of greater purity than the Philippian. We do not find a single charge preferred against its members. On the contrary, their work of faith and labor of love are commended by the Apostle in the highest terms. Their piety was remarkable for its uniformity. They manifested obedience to the gospel, not merely in the Apostle's presence, but also in his absence. Still, he deemed it necessary that they should be exhorted to perseverance. Their salvation could be completed only by the exercise of the same solicitude and diligence with which it had been commenced.

It is a frequent but just remark, that truth commonly lies between extremes. The remark is particularly applicable to the conflicting views

which have prevailed respecting human and divine agency. Some carry their notions of divine agency so far as to run into downright fatalism. They make man a mere machine, and annihilate all moral responsibility. On the other hand, there are some who, in their zeal to maintain the freedom of the creature, overlook or depreciate the agency of the Creator. Both these extremes are injurious, and should be carefully avoided. The happy medium is to be found in the perfect harmony between the agency of God and the agency of man. Such is the subject presented for our consideration in the text.

I. Let us attend, in the first place, to *the agency of God in the work of human salvation*. “It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” Not only did salvation originate with him; it is also communicated by him. As he purchased it, so he also applies it. On this point the Scriptures are full and explicit. They teach us, in the most positive terms, that man is dependent on God for all things, not only for temporal but for spiritual blessings. It is “in him we live, and move, and have our being.” “The preparation of the heart and the answer of the tongue are from the Lord.” “We are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves,

but our sufficiency is of God.” “His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness.” “No man,” says Jesus, “can come unto me except the Father draw him. Without me ye can do nothing.”

Such are the *general* terms in which the Scriptures exhibit human dependence. But they do not stop here.

The work of regeneration or conversion we find expressly ascribed to God, as its efficient or primary cause. “A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and give you a heart of flesh. Which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and in sins.” “Surely,” said Ephraim, “after that I was turned I repented. Turn thou me, and I shall be turned.”

We find, moreover, that *each particular grace or holy exercise is ascribed to divine efficiency*. “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us. Then hath God granted repentance unto life. To you it is

given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." Faith is called "the operation of God." The Ephesians are represented as having believed "according to his mighty power."

And as the commencement of the Christian life is ascribed to God, so also is its *progress and consummation*. "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ." "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation;" "working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight."

And what is the language of prayer but the expression of dependence? Why do we present our petitions to God, but because our wants can be supplied alone by him? It is thus, whether we pray for temporal or spiritual favors. "Create in me," cried the Psalmist, "O God, a clean heart, and renew within me a right spirit."

The fact of human dependence cannot, then, be questioned. But what is the nature of that work which God performs in regeneration, or in the production of holiness? According to the text, he "*works in us to will and to do of his good pleasure.*" This is all that is requisite to accomplish the result. We need no new soul—no new faculties—no new revelation; we need simply to be made willing to

do that to which the heart is naturally disinclined—willing to consider our ways, turn from our sins, renounce our self-dependence, accept the offer of salvation through Christ, and devote ourselves to his service and kingdom. Mind never can be forced. Coerce the will, and it ceases to be will, the laws of our mental constitution are suspended, and all moral freedom and accountability is destroyed. Men sin not from compulsion, but from choice, and they are just as voluntary in forsaking it as in committing it—as voluntary in their submission to God as in their rebellion against him.

Willing and doing, let it be observed, are inseparable. When a sinner is willing to obey God, he always does obey him; so that the proper test of his willingness is his actual obedience. The impenitent may *desire* to be saved, but they are certainly not *willing* to be saved; for the promise is, that the willing and obedient shall eat the good of the land. No sooner does the heart consent to accept salvation on the terms of the gospel, than every obstacle is at once and effectually removed.

But how does God work in men to will and to do? There are but two modes in which we can conceive this to be done. The one is by a *physical*, the other by a *moral* power. Let us carefully mark the distinction. *Physical* power is a direct and

immediate exertion of Omnipotence, the power by which this world was originally brought into being, and by which it is upheld in its present order and harmony, the power by which miraculous effects were produced, the sick were healed, and the dead restored to life.

Moral power is the power of truth, of argument, of motive, of persuasion. When you seize hold of your child, and by your superior muscular strength, pull him away from some impending danger, it is an exertion of *physical* power; but when you prevail with him to escape by motives, when you point out to him his exposure, and urge him to exercise his own free agency, his preservation, in this case, would be the result of *moral* power.

Now, we maintain that it is by an agency of this kind, and not by a mere exertion of Omnipotence that God effects the regeneration of the soul.

This might be shown from the *very nature and constitution of the human mind*. Mind can act only in view of motives. If a man chooses, there must be certain reasons that determine his choice. The will, according to Edwards, is always influenced by the greatest apparent good. Conversion is a voluntary change from sin to holiness, a change which is effected in view of appropriate truth.

There is one kind of agency which is adapted to unintelligent matter ; another which is adapted to responsible mind. The planets, for example, are moved in their orbits, not by moral but by physical law ; not by the law of the ten commandments, but by force. It is not thus, however, that God governs mind. However entire may be his control over it, he has so constituted it that it acts freely, acts in view of motives. "God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty, that it is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined to good or evil.—*Presbyterian Confession*, ix. 9.

If we consult the *Scriptures* on this subject, we find that they expressly ascribe the conversion of the soul to the power of God, exerted through the instrumentality of truth. "The sword of the Spirit is the word of God. The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth." Hence, the appointment of the Christian ministry, as the grand instrumentality of bringing gospel truth before the minds of men, and pressing them to the acceptance of its overtures. Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men—compelling them to come in—praying them in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God. The influence of the Spirit in convincing, regenerating, and sanctifying men, is ordinarily

connected with the publication of the gospel. "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher?"

The precise manner in which the Spirit applies the truth to the heart, so as to overcome its deep-seated opposition to holiness, we do not pretend to determine. We have only to do with the fact as affirmed in the sacred scriptures; the explanation of the fact is a point with which we have no particular concern. We dare not, however, limit the divine agency. God can accomplish by the truth what man cannot. He has made the mind, and he knows how to get access to it. To him all the avenues of the heart are open, and he can reach it by such influences as he has wisely appointed, and as are best adapted to accomplish the end. He can present the truth in all its reality and importance. He can cause it not only to be understood, but *felt*. He can awaken thought, and bring into activity all the powers and susceptibilities of the human soul—dispersing its darkness, removing its prejudices, silencing its objections, overcoming its resistance, and sweetly inclining it to accept the offers of divine mercy.

His influence always accords with the constitution or laws of man's intelligent and moral nature. That influence cannot become a matter of consci-

ousness but from its effects, no more than the influence by which our natural life is sustained, or our ordinary actions are directed. If I move my hand, it is God who moves it ; and yet at the time, I am conscious of no agency enabling me to do it save my own. It is thus, too, with our spiritual exercises. We know that God is working in us to will and to do, only by our willing and doing. Our consciousness relates solely to the operation of our own minds.

II. Having contemplated the agency of God, let us now consider *the agency of man*. In our text the two are closely connected. Whatever God does in the work of human salvation, can never supersede the necessity of the vigorous efforts of man. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

The necessity of human exertion may be inferred *from the divine commands*. Those very exercises which, in the Bible, are ascribed to God, are also made a matter of human obligation. Is a *new heart* said to be the gift of God ? the sinner is also commanded to make himself a new heart. Is the *love of God* shed abroad within us by the Holy Spirit ? we are also commanded to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. Does God grant *repentance* unto life ?

he also commands all men every where to repent. Is *faith* "the operation of God?" This is also his commandment that we believe on his Son Jesus Christ. All the Christian virtues which are represented as "the fruit of the Spirit," are also enjoined as Christian duties. "Giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity."

All such commands plainly regard men as capable of moral action, as acting freely, and as responsible for their conduct. Conversion is nothing more than an actual compliance with the requisitions of the gospel.

Again; *the nature of man's dependence upon the agency of the Spirit* is such as cannot in the least diminish human obligation. It is a dependence growing entirely out of his perverseness, or his voluntary and desperate depravity. Nothing hinders him from obeying God but his unwillingness, and the special influence of the Spirit is needed only to overcome this indisposition. Because the sinner has lost his disposition to obey, God has certainly not lost his right to command. Your obligation is founded, not upon the state of your hearts, whether holy or sinful, but upon the rela-

tion you sustain to God as the subjects of his moral government, and the moral constitution with which, as such, you are endowed. Were Gabriel this moment to become a rebel against the throne of heaven, the same law that binds him in his state of innocency would bind him in his state of apostacy. The responsibility of devils remains unchanged. The fact that they are sinners can never release them from the obligation to be holy. Where there is no responsibility there can be no guilt or criminality. The fall of Adam left his accountability unimpaired. Though he lost his integrity, he lost not his free agency.

We are dependent on God as his *creatures*. Our breath is in his hands, and in him are all our ways. This dependence, however, can never release us from the obligation and necessity of using appropriate means. If our temporal blessings come from God, they ordinarily come to us only in a certain way. We are not only recipients, but agents. Human dependence and human obligation and activity are here in perfect harmony.

As *sinners*, we are dependent on God for our spiritual blessings; but that dependence, instead of affording a plea for indolence, should tend only to humiliation, and furnish a more powerful stimulus to prayer and exertion.

Divine agency is rendered effectual only by calling

into requisition human agency. God works in man, not as you work upon a block or a stone, but as a voluntary agent—works in him by leading him to work, or, as it is expressed in the text, works in him *to will and to do* of his good pleasure. The effectual operation of the Spirit always results in arousing the sinner to action himself. So far from waiting to be operated upon as a mere machine, his active powers are called into the most vigorous exercise. He *presses* into the kingdom of God—*strives* to enter in at the strait gate—works out his salvation with fear and trembling. “Draw me,” says the redeemed sinner, “and I will run after thee.”

And this is *in perfect accordance with the experience of all true Christians.* While they gratefully acknowledge that it is by the grace of God that they are what they are, they are not conscious of the least coercion. God turned them, and they turned. They acted as freely as though they acted entirely independent of him. They saw the evil of sin and repented of it. They saw that God was glorious, and their hearts were drawn towards him in admiration and praise. They saw that Christ was an all-sufficient Saviour, and they fled to him as their refuge. Their surrender to God was not only voluntary, but cordial. They yielded themselves to him as their “most reasonable service,” “choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people

of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." For the truth of these assertions I need only appeal to the experience of each Christian present. Go back to the memorable moment of your translation from a state of nature to a state of grace. Was your submission to Christ the result of compulsion, or of choice? Never did you act more freely than at that blessed period when you could say, "My beloved is mine and I am his."

"Welcome, welcome, dear Redeemer,
Welcome to this heart of mine;
Lord, I make a full surrender,
Every power and thought be thine;
Thine entirely,
Through eternal ages thine!"

And as you acted freely when you first gave yourself to God, so have you been equally free in all your subsequent course. The process of sanctification has been carried forward as it was commenced, not independently of God, but by his grace working in you to will and to do, thus enabling you to maintain the beginning of your confidence steadfast unto the present hour.

REMARKS.

1. How evident it is, from the view which has now been presented, that *between human dependence*

and human activity there exists the most entire harmony. Both are doctrines of the Bible, and to each should be given its proper place and application. We may not be able fully to explain or comprehend their connection, but that, surely, can afford no reason why we should reject the facts in the case. It is one thing for a doctrine to be mysterious; another for it to be contradictory. Our dependence and obligation as creatures, in reference to the preservation of human life, are also inexplicable, and yet no one, on that account, would think of denying either. Why, then, should we have any difficulty with the connection between human and divine agency in the work of salvation? Neither of these doctrines can be dispensed with. To dwell exclusively upon either would destroy the harmony of the Christian system, and would be attended with results the most pernicious. To exhibit merely the agency of God, would tend to annihilate all responsibility, and lull the conscience into fatal security. On the other hand, to hold up to view merely human freedom and obligation, would derogate from the divine glory, and foster a spirit of pride and self-sufficiency. The consistent and harmonious presentation of these two apparently conflicting truths, constitutes one of the most difficult, yet most important points of ministerial duty.

2. We remark further: *How eminently is this subject calculated to call forth the devout gratitude of the renewed heart.* It traces all our salvation to the grace of God, and as its original source. What but this, Christian, has made you to differ from others? Were you by nature any better than those who are estranged from God? By nature we were all the children of wrath, even as others—dead in trespasses and in sins—alienated from God, and the life that is of God. Had you, then, any more claim on the divine regard? Alas! you had forfeited everything, and merited from the hand of justice only unmixed evil. “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he hath saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ. By grace ye are saved.”

“What am I, O! thou glorious God!
That thou such mercies hast bestowed
On me—the vilest reptile—me!
Me in my blood thy love passed by,
And stopped my ruin to retrieve;
Wept o’er my soul, thy pitying eye,
Thy bowels yearn’d—and sounded ‘Live.’
Dying, I heard the welcome sound,
And pardon in thy mercy found.”

3. Let us learn also from this subject, *the importance of Christian vigilance*. The exhortation in the text, though it may be addressed to men universally, had immediate reference to professed Christians, to those whom the Apostle designates as “saints in Christ Jesus,” in whom God had “begun a good work,” and who had been distinguished for their devoted and exemplary piety. And yet, regenerated as they were—pardoned as they were—heirs of eternal life as they were—there was still occasion for the most unremitted diligence—“*Work out your own salvation,*” &c.

Similar injunctions addressed to the people of God, abound in the sacred Scriptures. “Giving all diligence, make your calling and election sure.” “Be not slothful, but followers of them, who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises.” “We desire that every one of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end.”

It was the advice of President Edwards to a young Christian, “Keep up as great a strife and earnestness in religion, as if you knew yourself to be in a state of nature, and were seeking conversion.” There is just as much necessity for vigilance on the part of the Christian, as there is on the part of the awakened and inquiring sinner. All along our path to heaven we are beset with

difficulties and dangers; and we are secure only when upheld by the hand of Omnipotence. While we rejoice, it should ever be "with trembling." "Be not high-minded, but fear." "Let us fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it."

Whatever may be our attainments, there still remains ample room for progress. The prize is still before us; let us press our way onward until we attain the fullness of salvation in Christ Jesus. Make not your dependence on God a plea for indolence. Divine influence furnishes the motive and encouragement to human activity. If our strength is in God, let us then look to him in the use of the appointed means. God helps those who try to help themselves.

4. Let me yet add: *sinner must work out their salvation or perish*. I do not say that you must work out a righteousness of your own in which you may stand accepted before God. That is not demanded—not needed. The atonement of Christ is complete, and the offer of salvation entirely gratuitous. Still, you cannot be saved without an effort. Something must be done, and done speedily. It will not do to sit still, and wait to be operated upon in a state of mere passivity. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Yes, my hearer, you have a work to

do—a work of infinite moment—a work on which is suspended your interests for immortality. You have no time to lose. Your day of grace is fast passing away, and the opportunity of salvation will soon close forever. Oh, begin now. Think of the mighty interest at stake—your *salvation*—your *own* salvation! Well may you enter upon the work “with fear and trembling.” There is great danger of failure. The obstacles that stand in your way to heaven are numerous and formidable; and every day those obstacles are increasing. Work, then, for your life. It may cost you an effort if you would be saved; but will it not also cost you one to be lost? If you refuse to work out your *salvation*, you must work out your *damnation*. If you will not lay up treasure in heaven, you must treasure up to yourself wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

SERMON XIII.

EXPERIMENTAL EVIDENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.—
1 John v. 10.

THE religion of the gospel comes to us with evidence of its divinity the most abundant and conclusive. When we open the Bible, we find impressed on its every page the marks of a divine hand. Its contents are just such as might be expected in a book emanating from Heaven. The truth which it reveals in reference to God and man; in reference to our ruin as sinners, and our redemption through Christ; in reference to this world and the next, carries with it, to every unprejudiced mind, the conviction that it is the truth of *God*. There, too, is what is denominated the *external* or *historical* evidence, consisting in the performance of the most notable miracles, the fulfillment of the most remarkable prophecies, and a train of concurring events, from one period to another, down to the present age.

But in addition to these sources of evidence, there is exhibited in our text a *third*; namely,

the evidence of *experience or consciousness*, resulting from the actual influence of the gospel on all who truly embrace it. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness *in himself*." We know that the gospel is true, because it accomplishes in us the benevolent design which it proposes. Its effects are such as none but a religion of celestial birth could produce. No other system of religion has been known to produce such effects; and as every effect must have an adequate cause, we infer that a religion that can thus meet all the wants of our nature, a religion that can confer upon us such exalted privileges, must have had its origin, not with man, but with infinite wisdom and benevolence.

I. I remark that *the representation which the Scriptures give of the sinful, ruined, and perishing condition of man*, is fully corroborated by the internal experience and consciousness of every true believer. It is upon this doctrine that the whole scheme of redemption is founded. The doctrine, indeed, is not one peculiar to revelation. Reason itself, the testimony of conscience, the general history of the world, and the physical evils which everywhere abound, clearly testify that man is a sinner, and under condemnation. The Scriptures only reiterate and confirm this testimony. They

trace the depravity of man to its original source, describe its malignancy, and expose its fearful consequences. They exhibit this depravity as *total, universal, and desperate*. They teach us that “*all* have sinned and come short of the glory of God”—that “the heart of the sons of men is *full of evil*,” and that we are utterly “*without strength*,” to recover ourselves from our deep apostacy, or satisfy the claims of the law under whose penalty we lie.

Now, humiliating and alarming as this representation of man’s moral condition may be, every Christian has the fullest conviction of its truth. Whatever objections may be urged against the scriptural view of man’s total alienation from God, to the mind truly enlightened by divine grace, no doctrine is invested with more solemn reality and importance. The Holy Spirit has convinced the believer of *sin*—not of sin in general, sin in the abstract, but of his own particular sinfulness. In the light of God’s law he has seen himself as covered with moral defilement, and as righteously condemned to death eternal. With Job he is ready to exclaim, “Behold I am vile!” with the Psalmist, “Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me!” with Paul, “I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.”

On this point there is, among all true Christians, a remarkable *unanimity*. All speak the same language, all make the same confessions, all are the subjects of the same experience. Find them where you may, all agree that by nature they were dead in sin, and that spiritual life is the fruit of grace alone.

“When Mr. Occam, the Indian preacher, was in England, he visited Mr. Newton of London, and they compared experiences. ‘Mr. Occam,’ says Mr. Newton, ‘in describing to me the state of his heart, when he was a blind idolater, gave me in general a striking picture of what my own was in the early part of my life, and his subsequent views correspond with mine, as face answers to face, in a glass.’”

With every believer there is a growing conviction of the corruption of human nature. The more he learns of the purity of the divine character, and the extent of the divine law, the more does he see of his own vileness, and his entire dependence on a Saviour’s grace and merits.

II. Every true believer has the witness in himself of *the efficacy of atoning blood, to relieve the burdened conscience, and restore him to the divine favor and friendship*. The Scriptures point us to the sacrifice of the cross as the only effective pro-

pietation for sin and ground of man's acceptance with God. They assure us that "by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified;" but that, on the simple condition of faith alone, the penitent receive a free and full acquittal from the sentence of condemnation, and are adopted into the family of heaven—that "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Now, is this a reality or is it a fiction? Whatever doubts others may entertain about the matter, the Christian has an internal conviction of its truth. He has tested the power of the Gospel, and he consequently knows its efficacy. While he has felt his sins to be an intolerable burden, he has also felt that burden removed. He may have tried every other expedient that promised him relief, but all failed save this. He found it in the peace-speaking blood of Jesus, but he could find it nowhere else. It was a view of the great propitiation that first inspired hope within his agitated bosom, and that turned his night of sorrow into bright and joyous day. He knows in whom he has believed, and is now a witness to the truth that the blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin. Christ has saved *him*; how, then, can he doubt? He knows that what no obedience, no merit of his own could ever accomplish, has been accomplished for him by his atoning Saviour. He has peace

with God, and peace within. Men may tell him that it is all a delusion; but you might as well tell a man who has been restored to health by the use of a certain medicine, that the medicine has no virtue, and that he is still pining away under his disease. We have tried the remedy of the Gospel, and we have felt its healing influence. We have found it precisely adapted to the malady; the aching head is now at rest, the throbbing heart is calmed, the guilty conscience is pacified. Heaven, that once frowned with vengeance, now smiles with love. The dark cloud has vanished, and with confidence we draw nigh to God as a reconciled Father and friend, and look forward to the future with hopes full of immortality and glory.

III. The believer also possesses an internal conviction of *the power of the Gospel to purify the heart and overcome the strength of human depravity*. We need a religion that can produce in us such a spiritual renovation—a religion that can deliver us not only from the consequences of sin, but from sin itself. Every man is conscious not only of guilt, but also of depravity—a nature fallen, degenerate and perverse.

Now, the Gospel directs us to a fountain open for sin and uncleanness. It reveals to us a method by which the power of sin may be broken, and

the heart may be purified. It furnishes us with influences by which those who are dead in sin may be quickened into spiritual life—by which the lost image of God may be restored, and man may be fitted for eternal fellowship with the great fountain of love and joy.

Such is its actual effect upon all who truly avail themselves of the provisions of divine mercy ; and of this change in their character and condition they have the evidence of *consciousness*. We know what we were *once*, and we know what we are *now*. We know that we once loved sin ; we know that we now hate it. We know that we once turned away from God with disaffection ; we know that he is now the object of our supreme delight. We know that prayer was once a burden ; we know that it is now a pleasure. We know that we once clung to the world as our chief good ; we know that our thoughts and desires now aspire after things above.

Are we deceived in regard to this change ? May we not be just as conscious of our feelings in reference to the objects of religion, as we are in reference to any other objects ? Men of the world ask, “How can these things be ?” but we speak that which we do know, and testify that which we have seen and felt. “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.”

Would that all our masters in Israel, who denounce the doctrine of spiritual regeneration as enthusiasm, would but determine its reality by actual experiment. Let them open their hearts to the influence of the Holy Spirit, and receive the kingdom of heaven as little children, and then shall they know the religion of the Gospel, not in its letter and form only, but in its spirit and power.

Why should any doubt the testimony of such numerous and credible witnesses, as to the power of the Gospel to purify from sin? Men of every rank and in every situation in life, here bear the same testimony. Did that testimony relate to any other matter, it would at once be received with full confidence. Why, then, reject it when it relates to the subject of religion? Take the case of John Newton, once a wretched profligate, and subsequently a most devout and exemplary believer in Jesus, whose sermons, correspondence, and poems breathe the very spirit of heaven, and have proved the means of spiritual benefit to untold numbers. What but the grace of God made him what he was? Did the Gospel effect no change in him? Was his experience all a delusion? His own epitaph, written with his own hand, tells the whole mystery of that wonderful transformation which had been effected in him by the power of the Gospel. "John Newton, once an infidel and

a libertine, a servant of slaves in Africa, was, by the rich mercy of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, preserved, restored, pardoned, and appointed to preach the faith he had long labored to destroy."

IV. The Christian has the same personal experience of *the truth and sweetness of the divine promises*. God has given to us "exceedingly great and precious promises,"—promises that relate to the life that now is, and to the life that is to come—promises of temporal and of spiritual good—promises adapted to every age and every condition—promises of pardon to the guilty, cleansing to the polluted, strength to the feeble, light to the benighted, succor to the tempted, and comfort to the sorrowing,—promises to the penitent, to the meek, to the believing, to the humble, to the liberal, to the merciful. Are these promises true? May they be relied on with confidence? Will God do as he has said?

Here there is but one sentiment among the faithful. They know that God is true from actual trial. They have proved his faithfulness, and how, then, can they question it? During a long pilgrimage many of them have rested on his word, and they have found it an immovable rock. Not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the

Lord their God hath spoken concerning them. Often, indeed, may their faith have been put to the test. The fulfillment of the divine promises may have been long delayed, and unbelief may have suggested that the Lord had forgotten to be gracious. Dark providences may have hedged up their way, or beclouded their prospects; but their hopes have never been disappointed, and their grateful testimony is, that “the Lord hath done all things well.”

“The gospel bears their spirits up,
A faithful and unchanging God
Lays the foundation of their hope,
In oaths, and promises, and blood.”

V. In this connection, we may refer also to *the efficacy of prayer*, as another subject of Christian experience. “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” The God of the Bible has revealed himself as the hearer of prayer. It abounds with the most gracious assurances of answer to prayer, and furnishes us also with numerous instances of the power of prayer.

All this, however, has, upon the unbelieving multitude, no practical influence. They restrain prayer before God, among other reasons, because they doubt its efficacy and utility. “What profit,” they ask, “should we have, if we pray unto

Him?" And as they have no hope of receiving, it is not much wonder that they decline asking.

But there are those who have put this matter to the test, and from their own blessed experience are prepared to acknowledge, "It is good for us to draw nigh to God." How often in answer to prayer has the cloud dispersed, and the sun of righteousness risen upon them with healing in his wings. How often when the enemy has come in like a flood, has the Spirit of the Lord raised up a standard; how often when grace has been ready to die, and hope to languish, have they repaired to the throne of mercy, and have been quickened into new life and joy; how often when Zion has been in a state of desolation, and when truth and righteousness seemed ready to perish, has the wilderness again been made to bud and blossom, and the cause of God been carried forward with fresh triumph. What Christian cannot tell of some signal answers to prayer? What Christian is not fully convinced of the efficacy of prayer? What Christian could be induced to forego the privilege of prayer? Who that has prayed in faith, has prayed in vain? "I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice, and he gave ear unto me. I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry." The Psalmist's experience was not peculiar. With

what a great cloud of witnesses are we surrounded, to testify to the effect of prayer. And what prayer did in former days, it can do still. It has lost none of its marvellous power. The day in which we live, as well as days of old, can tell of the exploits of prayer. Witness after witness might be cited, who, with one voice, would furnish their clear and decided testimony that prayer still “moves the hand that moves the world.” It was once said of the late Dr. Nelson, that there was apparently “no roof above him, no sky, no stars, nothing to separate the supplicant from the face of his Father.”

It is related of Dr. Judson that, overjoyed at some unexpected success of his labors, he declared that, feeble as his faith had been, he had never earnestly and perseveringly prayed for any blessing but at some time, and in some way very different perhaps from what he had expected, it had been granted.

That devoted servant of Christ, the Rev. Geo. Muller, the founder of an extensive orphan asylum at Bristol, England, an institution founded and sustained by prayer, remarks: “I never remember, in all my Christian course, that I ever *sincerely and patiently* sought to know the will of God by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, through the instrumentality of *the word of God*, but I have

always been directed rightly.” “When I lose such a thing as a key, I ask the Lord to direct me to it, and I look for an answer to my prayer. When a person with whom I have made an appointment does not come according to the fixed time, and I begin to be inconvenienced by it, I ask the Lord to be pleased to hasten him to me, and I look for an answer. When I do not understand a passage of the word of God, I lift up my heart to the Lord, that he would be pleased by his Holy Spirit to instruct me, and I expect to be taught.”

All this may appear, to those who are strangers to the power of prayer, like mere presumption or childish simplicity; but “the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant.”

VI. I may yet mention, as another subject of Christian experience, *the blessedness of true religion*. Christianity commends itself to us, not only as a religion of purity, but also as a religion of happiness. In his fallen state, man is a stranger to peace. Alienated from God, the proper centre and rest of his soul, he is vainly endeavoring to find some substitute for the loss. There is nothing under the sun to which he has not resorted, to fill the aching, melancholy void, and yet, with all that this world can offer, he still remains disappointed,

unsatisfied and unblest. Even in laughter his heart is sorrowful, and the end of mirth is heaviness.

And if, in his brightest moments, he often feels himself thus wretched, what must be his state in the hour of adversity and sorrow? Life is a scene of change, of bereavements, of trials. What we possess to-day we may be deprived of to-morrow. The tenderest ties may in a moment be cut asunder, and our hearts may be made to bleed with anguish. Neither wealth, nor rank, nor wisdom, nor talents afford us any security from the misfortunes to which flesh is heir. The evil day awaits us all. "We all do fade as a leaf." "Man cometh forth as a flower and is cut down; he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not." The grave is the house appointed for all the living. However vigorous may be our frames, they are all destined to corruption. "The fashion of this world passeth away," and all our purposes in regard to the present life will soon be broken and terminated forever. We all feel that we need some more durable and satisfying portion than this world can offer. We are conscious of wants which it can never meet; we are exposed to ills under which it can afford no relief; we are hastening to an end for which it can furnish no preparation. In our destitution and sadness, the gospel presents itself

as the only antidote to our woes—the only solace to the disconsolate. It proffers us a peace, which the world can neither give nor take away. It promises to bind up the broken heart, to wipe away the falling tear, to sustain us in the hour of trial, and to gild the future with light and hope.

Now the question is, can it do for us what it proposes? Can we find in this system of grace the rest which we have so long and so vainly sought from other sources? Can the mind here be relieved of its burdens? Can it obtain a portion adequate to its desires?

Here, too, we have the result of experiment. A fair trial has been made. Persons in every condition of life have fled to this last refuge, and in not a solitary instance has there been disappointment. The young, the gay, the rich, the noble, as well as the poor, the infirm and the aged, have here found repose. In communion with God, in a sense of his pardoning love, in submission to his will, in obedience to his commands, and in the hope of a blissful immortality, every desire has been satisfied, every grief has been assuaged, and their peace has been made to flow like a river. The uniform testimony of all God's servants is, that "in keeping his commandments there is great reward"—that "wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are paths of peace."

Here is a happiness, pure, elevating, permanent—a happiness inexhaustible and unimpaired by any external changes—a happiness which goes with us through life, and which remains unaffected even by sickness and death.

All this is a matter of experience. The Christian knows it to be real because he has *felt* it. He has drank at the fountain of eternal love, and has been satisfied. He has fled to God in the season of adversity, and has found in him succor. He has taken upon him the yoke of Christ, and has proved it to be light. He has died trusting to the merits and grace of his Redeemer, and death has lost its bitterness, and the grave its gloom. We have met with Christians in all circumstances, not only in prosperity but in adversity, in the fires and in the waters, and yet we have found them resigned, happy, exulting.

“He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself.” This evidence is the most satisfactory. Nothing can deprive the Christian of it. No sophistry can shake his confidence in a religion the truth of which he has himself tested. No persecutions, no sufferings can cause his faith to waver or move him from his integrity. For this religion he is prepared to make any sacrifice; for this he lives, and for this he is ready, like the apostle, to be *offered up*. He may be an illite-

rate man. He may never have furnished his mind with the historical arguments in favor of Christianity; but of one thing he is convinced, that the gospel has done for him all that it promises. "Whereas," says he, "I was once blind, now I see; whereas I was once lost, I am now found."

What more conclusive evidence does he want of the power of the gospel? "The man who has tasted honey, as certainly knows it is sweet, as the chemist who has tested its properties by scientific analysis." It is by the same process that thousands have obtained the fullest persuasion of the truth of religion. They have tested its power by actual experience, and they feel now that their feet are planted upon the eternal rock.

"A man of subtle reasoning asked
A peasant if he knew,
Where was the internal evidence,
That proved the Bible true?
The terms of disputative art,
Had never reached his ear—
He laid his hand upon his heart,
And only answered *Here*."

A scotch girl, converted under the preaching of Whitefield, when asked if her heart was changed, replied,—“Something I know is changed; it may be the world; it may be my heart; there is a great change somewhere I am sure, for every thing is different from what it once was.”

Oh ! that all my hearers would now come, and prove the efficacy of the gospel themselves. “Taste, and see that God is good.”

“Oh ! that we could all invite,
This saving truth to prove ;
Show the length and breadth and height,
And depth of Jesus’ love.”

Whatever doubts you may entertain, they may all be removed by personal trial. The gospel invites you to test its power. “Here,” it says, “is a remedy for all your woes ; here is pardon for the guilty ; here is cleansing for the polluted ; here is peace for the troubled ; here is consolation for the afflicted ; here is support for the dying.”

Will you yield to the claims of this gospel ? Will you accept its gracious overtures ? We assure you there will be no disappointment, no failure. Your doubts will all vanish, and that agitated mind will be forever at rest. “Now,” you will be ready to say, “we believe, not because of *thy* saying, but because we have heard him ourselves ; and we know that this is the Christ, the Saviour of the world.”

You have tried the world, and you know what is its worth. A thousand times have you turned away from it with disappointment, and sighed,—“Is there no better portion for man ?” Your heart.

it may be, is crushed with grief, but you know of no balm that can effectually heal the wound. Now, then, accept of heaven's remedy. Feed no longer on husks when there is bread enough in our Father's house, and to spare. Lean not for support upon a broken reed, when you may repose upon the arm of Omnipotence. Give your doubts to the winds. Away with all your unbelief and cavils. Only believe and you shall see the salvation of God.

“Believe, and show the reason of a man ;
Believe, and taste the pleasures of a God ;
Believe, and look with triumph on the tomb.”

SERMON XIV.

THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT.

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.—ROMANS viii. 16.

WHAT a blessed privilege is this — not only adopted into the family of God, but *assured* of our adoption!

It is an act of infinite condescension for him to receive us as his children. “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!” But that is not all; he also grants us his Spirit to *testify* to our sonship. Such our text represents as the common privilege of all true believers.

I. Our first inquiry here will relate to the *nature* of this witness. *How* does the Spirit bear testimony to our adoption? It is certainly not by any *external manifestation*. Thus Abraham was assured that Jehovah was his God, and his exceeding great reward. Thus Daniel was informed that he

was a "man greatly beloved," and that his prayer had gone up to heaven with acceptance. Thus Mary Magdalene and others, while the Saviour was on earth, received the audible assurance that their sins were forgiven.

There is no reason to believe that God speaks to men in this manner at the present day; and all that confidence which arises from such a source must, to say the least, be exceedingly questionable. The imagination of a good man may, indeed, be so excited, that what is only apparent, may seem to him real; but if men have no other evidence of salvation than that which is founded upon what they deem supernatural sounds or sights, that evidence must be both deceptive and ruinous.

Nor does the Spirit bear witness to our adoption *by any immediate revelation*. There can be no question that God *could* thus speak to our minds; for he thus spake to the Prophets and Apostles. The Spirit directly inspired them to utter or record the truth which they communicated. This inspiration was designed not so much for their personal benefit, as for the benefit of others. The assurance of their salvation was obtained precisely in the same way that we must obtain it. Since the canon of the Scriptures has been completed, God speaks to men, not by any new revelation, but by the truth already revealed, and applied by the agency of his

Spirit. It is by the truth that the soul is regenerated, sanctified, and receives the witness of its adoption.

I am aware that there are times when the Spirit operates upon the mind with such power, that old truths appear as if they were truths never before heard, or read, or known. Still, there is no truth thus presented, however clear and impressive, that is not already found in the sacred page—only that truth is now exhibited to us in a new aspect, and invested with new interest and importance.

I might yet remark : this witness does not consist in any *direct impression, impulse, or suggestion*, aside from all regard to our evidence of Christian character, or the fruits of the Spirit, as they are manifested in the heart and life. This could hardly be distinguished from an immediate revelation. It is a view which appears to us to have no foundation in Scripture, and which tends to fanaticism and delusion. The witness of the Holy Spirit to our adoption is always connected with the witness of our own spirit. Both testify to the same thing, and their testimony is entirely harmonious.

To set this whole matter in a clear and intelligible light, I remark :

1. The Scriptures distinctly furnish us with the *proper evidences of Christian character*. Among

these evidences we may mention contrition for sin, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, supreme love to God, delight in the divine character, joy in the divine government, submission to the divine will, benevolence to man, love to the brotherhood, the spirit of prayer, and a prompt, cheerful, impartial obedience to the precepts of the gospel.

2. While the word of God exhibits these exercises as decided marks of a gracious state, *they are all produced in the believer by the agency of the Holy Spirit.* It is the Spirit who takes away the heart of stone, and gives a heart of flesh. It is he who works in us that faith by which we become united to Christ, and receive a free justification. It is he who sheds abroad within us the love of God, and transforms us into the divine image and likeness. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

3. The believer, in comparing his state with the marks of piety presented in the word of God, *finds himself in actual possession of these marks.* Thus has he the evidence of his own *consciousness*, or the witness of his own spirit to his adoption into the family of Christ. Perceiving as he does, that he is under the influence of those gracious affections which are the fruit of the Spirit, he now justly draws the inference that he is born of God,

and an heir of glory. Hence, we are called upon to *examine ourselves* whether we be in the faith — to *prove our own work*. “Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our consciences.” “If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.”

4. To assist us in this investigation of our state, we are also favored with the *illumination of the Holy Spirit*, thus enabling us to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion that we have indeed believed to the saving of the soul. In the language of Bishop Bull; “The Spirit of God produces those graces in us which are the evidence of our adoption. It is he who, as occasion requires, illuminates our understandings, and assists our memories in discovering and recollecting those arguments of hope and comfort within ourselves. But God’s Spirit does witness *with*, not *without* our spirits and understandings, in making use of our reason in considering and reflecting upon those grounds of comfort, which the Spirit of God hath wrought in us, and from them drawing this comfortable conclusion to ourselves that we are the sons of God.”

With this agrees, substantially, the views of Dr. Thomas Scott. “The Holy Spirit,” he says, “by producing in believers the tempers and affections of children, as described in the Scriptures, most manifestly attests their adoption into God’s

family. This is not done by any voice, immediate revelation, or impulse, or merely by any text brought to the mind, (for all these are equivocal and delusory,) but by coinciding with the testimony of their own consciences as to their uprightness in embracing the gospel and giving themselves up to the service of God; so that while they are examining themselves as to the reality of their conversion, and find scriptural evidence of it, the Holy Spirit, from time to time, shines upon his own work, excites their holy affections into lively exercise, renders them very efficacious upon their conduct, and thus puts the matter beyond doubt, for while they feel the spirit of dutiful children towards God, they become satisfied concerning his paternal love to them."

"The common and ordinary method," says Dr. Watts, "whereby the Spirit of God bears witness that we are his children, is by drawing out our own spirits to search and inquire into the filial and holy dispositions which he himself has wrought in our hearts, and by assisting our consciences in the inquiry."

Thus, also, Dr. Wardlaw remarks: "The Holy Spirit speaks in the word. The same Spirit operates in the heart. There must be a correspondence between his testimony in the word and his operation in the heart. The evidence lies in this correspondence."

So, also, President Edwards: "The mark enstamped by the Spirit upon God's children is his own image, and this is the very thing which in Scripture is called *the seal of the Spirit*, and the *witness or evidence of the Spirit*."

"The witness of the Spirit," says John Angell James, "is our possessing this filial disposition, which characterizes every child of God."

The operations of the Spirit of God, it must be remembered, are identified with the operations of our own minds. He works in us in perfect harmony with the laws of our mental being, so that we become sensible of the Spirit's agency only by calling into exercise our own agency; thus leaving us as free and spontaneous, in our mental operations, as if we acted entirely independent of him. We discern the cause only in the effect.

It may be remarked, that the witness of the Spirit may greatly *differ as to the degree of its clearness and fullness*. In some instances it rises to such a conviction or persuasion as excludes all doubt and uncertainty, while in others it may amount simply to a prevailing consciousness that we are in a state of favor with God, disturbed, perhaps, by occasional distrust and fear.

The Christian's *evidence may sometimes be obscured* by physical infirmity; sometimes by the want of discriminating views of the plan of salvation; sometimes by extreme natural timidity and cau-

tion, inclining him to look upon everything in the most discouraging aspect; and sometimes, I may add, that evidence may be weakened or destroyed by causes positively criminal, such as the indulgence of sin, or the neglect of known duty.

Besides the *ordinary* witness of the Spirit which has been described, Dr. Watts speaks of what he terms the *extraordinary* witness. By this he understands one more immediate and sensible, by which the hearts of God's most favored servants are raised to an eminent sense of their interest in the divine mercy and assurance of their eternal salvation. This favor he supposes to be granted them under peculiar circumstances; as, for example, when they are called to difficult services or uncommon sufferings, when assailed by sore temptations, when engaged in special devotion, or when ardent piety is connected with great mental weakness. This, however, we may regard as nothing more than the *ordinary* witness of the Spirit, only afforded in a *higher degree*, and attended with more sensible consolations and supports.

With the views of Dr. Watts accord those of Dr. John Owen. "There are two ways," he says, "whereby the Spirit worketh this joy in the heart of believers." He doth it *immediately* by himself, without the consideration of any other acts or works of his, or the interposition of any reasonings

or deductions and conclusions. This does not arise from our reflex considerations of the love of God, but rather gives occasion thereunto. He so sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts, and fills them with gladness by an immediate act and operation. Of this joy there is no account to be given, but that the Spirit worketh it when and how he will.

2. The Spirit works this joy also *mediately* by his other works towards us.

It must be acknowledged that there is always great mystery connected with the *mode* of the Spirit's agency, whether that agency be mediate or immediate—whether it relate to regeneration, sanctification, or the sealing of the believer unto the day of redemption; yet there is certainly nothing unreasonable or visionary in the idea, that the Holy Spirit may so shine upon his own work of grace in the heart as to enable the Christian at once and clearly to discern the marks of his adoption, and thus impart to him the full and joyful assurance of his acceptance with God.

As Hagar in the wilderness did not perceive the fountain of water which was near her, until God opened her eyes to discern it, so the springs of divine life and holiness which are opened in the souls of believers are never clearly discerned until the Holy Spirit assists their inquiries, and sheds

upon their minds the beams of heavenly light and glory. "What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father." "Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit."

Whatever views may be entertained respecting the nature of the Spirit's witness, among good men there can be but one sentiment as to its reality and blessed effects. The primitive Christians, we are told, "walked in the comforts of the Holy Ghost," and rejoiced in Christ "with joy unspeakable and full of glory;" and if we fail of this privilege, the fault is not in the Gospel, but in our own unbelief and indolence.

How common is it for the burdened sinner, when he believes in Jesus, in a moment to have his darkness turned into light, his sorrow into joy. And from what arises this sudden and glorious change, but from the consciousness that he has now become reconciled to God through the blood of his Son—a consciousness wrought in him by

the agency of the Holy Spirit—once operating as a reprover, but now as a comforter.

And there are times, in the experience of Christians, when their minds are filled with extraordinary light, when their affections are uncommonly ardent, and when their peace is made to flow like a river—times when they seem already to drink from the fountain of bliss that flows from the throne of God and the Lamb, and the soul is almost impatient to fly away to the bosom of Jesus. And to what will you attribute these elevated and delightful emotions, but to the invisible yet powerful influence of the Holy Spirit, “the earnest of our future inheritance.” Whether we regard this influence as direct or indirect, immediate or mediate, is a matter of only secondary consideration, provided we hold to the great fact itself.

The world may call it all a delusion, but we know its blessed reality, and have the witness of it in our own bosoms.

II. We propose now, in the second place, to dwell on the *importance* or *desirableness* of this witness.

1. I remark, then, it is important *to render us truly happy*. No mind can be at rest while it is in suspense, in regard to its future destiny. The time is not far distant when we shall all pass away

from the present scene of probation, and enter upon our allotment for eternity. "What, then, will be the doom of my undying spirit? Where am I to take up my final abode? Shall I be numbered with the blessed, or be cast off with the lost? Shall I dwell in the life-giving presence of God and the Lamb, or shall I be the eternal monument of divine wrath?"

Who can be indifferent to questions of such moment? Who can be satisfied while interests so high and sacred are in suspense? I know there are men who never give themselves any concern about the future. They seem to think that it will take care of itself; or, with a kind of desperation, they rush forward, resolved to brave the issue. No man, however, who seriously reflects on his immortal nature and destiny, can find relief but in a well-grounded hope of future felicity. If we come short of this privilege, we come short of the most precious inheritance of the saints. True religion is both calculated and designed to promote human happiness; but in order that we may enjoy the consolations of the Gospel, we must be brought thoroughly under its influence. We must not only have faith in Christ, but also the evidence of our faith; so that with the Apostle we can say, "*I know* whom I have believed." "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

“To take a glimpse within the veil,
To know that God is mine;
These are the joys that never fail,
Unspeakable! Divine!”

2. The witness of the Spirit to our adoption will also *inspire us with confidence in prayer*. “If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God; and whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.”

It is the tendency of slavish fear to drive us from God. Instead of courting the divine presence, it rather shrinks from it. Guilt burdens the spirit; guilt seals the lips; guilt rises up as a cloud to shut out the light of heaven from the soul. Not until we can recognize in God a Father and a friend, can we come to him with any true confidence. Now we approach him not as slaves, but as children; not with the spirit of bondage, engendering fear, but “with the spirit of adoption, crying, Abba, Father.”

In dependence upon the merits of our great Intercessor, and assisted by the Holy Spirit, we come boldly to the throne of grace, assured that whatever we need, infinite benevolence will bestow. With entire freedom we make mention of every want, unbosom every grief, and pour forth every desire. And while we thus draw nigh to God, he,

at the same time, draws nigh to us — giving us fresh tokens of his love — affording us brighter manifestations of his glory, and causing us to feel that we are “quite on the verge of heaven.”

3. This witness of the Spirit is also of the highest importance *as a stimulus to Christian fidelity*.

The doubting professor is commonly so occupied with his own case, that he feels but little inclined to take any interest in the salvation of others. Indeed, the very uncertainty in which his own destiny appears to be involved, is often urged as a plea for neglect and inactivity. “I have so much to do,” it is said, “with my own state, that I cannot think of concerning myself about the state of others. How can I labor to secure their salvation, when I know not that my own is secured?”

And while this undecided state of mind indisposes us for benevolent effort, its tendency is also to *hinder our success*—to impair our influence. If our religion can do no more for us than impart a feeble, glimmering hope of future happiness, it presents to the world but little that is attractive and inviting. To recommend the Gospel to others, we must be able to testify to its happy influence upon ourselves. It was this that gave to the primitive Christians such amazing power. The manly avowal of their bright hopes of immortality, arrested the attention of the most thoughtless, and produced

the conviction that a religion which could thus bear up the soul under present trials, and welcome death as the introduction to life and glory, must have its origin, not with man, but with God. The joy of the Lord is the strength of his people. Nothing can so fit us for active, devoted, self-denying exertion in the cause of Christ, as the light of God's countenance—the comfortable assurance that we are the objects of his special love and favor.

4. *And what a support is this witness to our adoption in the hour of affliction and sorrow.* No matter what may be the nature of our trials, we are prepared to regard them all, not as the visitations of wrath, but of love. Painful as may be the strokes of Divine Providence, we feel assured that their design is purely benevolent, and must ultimately work for our spiritual good. Cheerfully we resign ourselves into the paternal hands of God, leaving it to him to direct our steps, and order all the events and circumstances of our life. “The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.” The vessel in which we have embarked may be driven and tossed, but while Jesus is at the helm, we have nothing to fear. The future may be shrouded in darkness; our way may be hedged up by a thousand difficulties; still we dread no evil. While we are grateful for past mercies, we confide all our future interests to him

who has said, "I will never leave nor forsake thee." Our only concern is to be found in the path of duty—results we leave with God—willing that he should choose our inheritance for us—to give or to withhold, as in his infinite wisdom he may see best. Trial may succeed trial; one wave of sorrow may quickly follow another; still, we are persuaded, that God is ordering all things right, and that our night of anguish will soon end in glorious, joyous day.

5. How important, also, is this witness *in our conflict with the last enemy*. When that solemn crisis arrives, nothing can afford us any sure support but scriptural and unequivocal evidence, that we are the heirs of salvation. If we can leave this matter in doubt now, we shall feel that we need assurance *then*. How dreadful to pass into eternity, uncertain whether our destiny is to be one of happiness or misery!

On the other hand, how little occasion have we to fear death, if assured that it is to us but "the gate to endless joy." With the unclouded prospect of glory before us, we may hail the hour that will tear down this tabernacle of clay, and introduce us to our long-sought rest.

It was this confident hope of a blessed immortality that led David to say, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will

fear no evil, for thou art with me ; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.” It was this that called forth the exclamation of Stephen, “ Lord Jesus, receive my spirit !” It was this that led Paul, on the eve of martyrdom, to exult, “ I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith ; henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day.” And it is this that has inspired the lips of thousands with the triumphant shout, “ Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

My dear hearers, what do you know of this testimony of the Spirit ? Have you indeed “ a good hope through grace ”—a hope intelligent, scriptural, sure ? Be not deceived. Let the ground of your confidence be thoroughly examined ; and beware of crying peace, unless God himself has spoken peace.

There are those who *ought* to doubt their state. As they bear not the fruits of the Spirit, how can they enjoy the witness of the Spirit ? Can the Spirit testify to a falsehood ?—testify that you are God’s adopted children, when his word declares that you are yet the children of disobedience ? How can you have the witness of the Holy Spirit, when you have not even the witness of your own

spirit? “If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.”

Oh, what a fearful state is this! You have the sentence of condemnation already within you; and just as certainly as you are self-condemned, do you also lie under the condemnation of the divine law, and will be condemned in the great day of final reckoning.

How can you rest satisfied a single moment in this state? The awful future lies just before you. Earth's shadows are fast flitting away, and then come the dread realities of eternity. Oh, how dark are the prospects that lie before you—no heaven—no hope! What will you do in that hour, when the scenes of the judgment open to your vision, and you find yourself without any valid title to the saint's inheritance? How can you thus meet the king of terrors? how pass up to the tribunal of God?

Oh, that you would lay hold on eternal life while it is now within your grasp. Still the Spirit whispers in your ear, “Come, and take the water of life freely.” It may be that he has already convinced you of sin. Now, may he enter your heart as the Comforter. Resist his kind influence no longer. Give him now a cordial welcome, and he will give you a peace which the world cannot give nor take away—a hope which shall prove like an anchor to your soul, sure and steadfast.

SERMON XV.

THE TRIAL AND DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN CHARACTER.

And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no."—DEUTERONOMY viii. 2.

THE dispensations of God's providence towards his people Israel were marked by circumstances of peculiar interest. Instead of leading them directly to the promised land, he conducted them by a circuitous route through the wilderness for forty years; and during that period not only favored them with the most remarkable mercies and deliverances, but also afflicted them with the sorest calamities and trials. This, our text informs us, was done, in order to prove their sincerity, and to humble their pride and rebellion.

Whatever peculiarity may have distinguished the dealings of God with that nation, all of us are under the government of the same Almighty Ruler of the universe. Not a single event transpires, in connection with our journey through life, but is

ordered or permitted by him. He is leading each of us along in his own way, and accomplishing through us his own purposes. The most trivial occurrences, as they may be deemed by us, constitute important links in that providence by which he is working out his own great and glorious designs. The circumstances in which we are placed, and the influences with which we are surrounded, from day to day, are all under the direction of his infinite wisdom and benevolence. And he has the same end to accomplish by his providences towards us that was contemplated in reference to the Jews : it is to humble and to prove us,—to know what is in our hearts, whether we will keep his commandments or not.

God tries men now as certainly as he did of old. The trial may not always be so sensible and manifest, but it is equally real and important.

The *design* of this trial is the development, as well as the improvement, of human character. Not that God *needs* any information respecting us. He sees the end from the beginning. To him the hearts of men are known with unerring certainty. Whatever mistake we may make in judging ourselves, with him there can be no mistake. Long before Judas was placed in circumstances by which his heart prompted him to betray the Saviour, God knew what was in that heart. “He searches

the heart, and tries the reins of the children of men."

The design of this trial is to *develop our character to ourselves and to the world*. It is of the highest importance that we should form just views of our moral state. We are prone to self-flattery and self-delusion, and it is often not until we are tried that we discover the defect and partiality of our judgment. Men are not unfrequently influenced by the basest passions while they seem scarcely conscious of the fact. The principles of avarice, pride, envy, jealousy, may be at work in their bosoms while they are wholly ignorant of their strength, and may even overlook their existence. They can more easily regard these principles as swaying others than as having any control over themselves. The character is thus moulded, while the unhappy victims hardly dream of the chains with which they are fettered, and the fearful ruin which lies directly before them. When Hazael was told by the prophet of the enormities which he would perpetrate, ignorant of the strength of his corruptions, he exclaimed, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" The event, however, fully proved that the man of God had uttered only the words of truth and soberness. We know not what is in our hearts until they are revealed to us in the course of God's providence. The

very sins which men are ready to condemn in others they are often unconsciously guilty of themselves, and crimes of which they may now be innocent they are at once prepared to perpetrate, when placed in different circumstances and exposed to new temptations. The Jews condemned, in the most unmeasured terms, the persecuting spirit of their ancestors, and flattered themselves that had they lived in their days, their conduct towards the prophets would have been directly the reverse, while, at the same time, their hearts rankled with the same enmity against the truth, and their hands eventually became crimsoned with the blood of the Son of God. And there are, undoubtedly, those at the present day who are ready to condemn the cruelty of these Jews, who, if placed in the same circumstances, would develop the same depravity.

There is no knowledge more valuable than that which we derive from experience, and the most satisfactory acquaintance we can form of our character is that which is founded on trial. We read of "gold tried in the fire,"—a religion that bears the test of thorough examination and severe discipline. The more it is tried the brighter it shines. The fire consumes not the metal, only the dross. It is thus that many a timid and doubting Christian has ultimately had his perplexities removed,

and his faith and hope confirmed. The repeated trials of his sincerity, to which he has been subjected, has at length imparted to him such an assurance of his devotion to God that, with Hezekiah, he could say, "Remember, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight."

We see, therefore, the propriety of that trial of character which we are all now undergoing. Just as important as it is that we should know ourselves, so important is it that the arrangements of Divine Providence should be such as are calculated to develop our character, or to show what are the prevailing principles and dispositions by which we are controlled.

Various are the ways in which God, in his providence, subjects us to this test.

I. *Prosperity* is a trial of human character. There are seasons when the divine dispensations toward us are eminently propitious. Our path is gilded with sunshine and strewn with flowers. Our undertakings are crowned with success. Our worldly substance is increased, and our cup is made to run over. Health mantles our cheeks and sparkles in our eyes. We are not in trouble as other men, neither are we plagued with those dis-

appointments, losses and bereavements with which they are visited. Our sky is bright, our sea smooth, and our mountain appears to us to stand strong. Desirable as we may regard it to be placed in these circumstances, the test of character to which we are subjected is one extremely trying. It is an ordeal through which few can pass without injury. "The prosperity of fools," we are told, "shall destroy them." "Let favor be shown to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness." When Jeshurun waxed fat, he kicked, and forsook the God who made him, and lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation.

How prone are we, in the midst of our prosperity, to feel that this world is our home, to cleave to it as our chief good, and to lose sight of the "better and more enduring substance." How prone to become exalted above measure, to forget the hand that has so kindly fostered us, and thus neglect to render to God according to the benefits which we have received from him. "I spake unto thee in thy prosperity, but thou saidst I will not hear." "Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God." Thus the means which are mercifully designed to draw men to God, tend only to alienate them from him. Blessings that call for the warmest gratitude become the occasion of more aggravated rebellion. We need not

wonder, then at the caution—"When thou shalt have eaten and art full, then beware lest thou forget the Lord that brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage." When all things go well with us, then it is that we have need for peculiar watchfulness. In nothing is the grace of God toward his people more richly displayed than in preserving them from the evils which are in the world. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

"I know," says the Apostle, "both how to be abased and I know how to abound; everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need." True religion prepares us for all changes and all events. Whether the course of the Christian be smooth or rough, it is still upward, and like the shining light, it shineth more and more, unto the perfect day.

II. *Adversity* is another test of human character. It is the same God that kills and makes alive, that casts down and lifts up, that gives and takes away. While he shows himself in the sunshine, he also rides upon the storm. His providences toward us are often severely afflictive. The whole heavens are overcast with clouds. Our purposes are broken off; a dismal shade is thrown upon our prospects;

our frames are wasted by disease, and we are made to "possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed us; when we lie down we say, When shall we arise and the night be gone; we are full of tossings to and fro, until the dawning of the day." Death enters our habitations, and occasions melancholy vacancies. The heart bleeds with sorrow, and the spirit is weighed down under an accumulation of misfortunes. These things are *not casual*. "I form the light," says the Almighty, "and create darkness; I make peace and create evil; I, the Lord, do all these things." And he never acts without *design*. The same wisdom that guides him in the bestowment of his favors, guides him in the visitation of the rod. Our affections are all to be regarded as so many trials of our character. They are intended to show what is in our hearts—to make us acquainted with ourselves. They are all experiments to discover our prevailing principles and dispositions. It was for this end that God afflicted his servant Job. The patriarch had been charged with selfishness and hypocrisy. To test his character, he is placed in the furnace. One calamity succeeds another. Not only is he stripped of his property, his servants and his children, but from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet he is covered with a most loathsome disease. And

how does he bear the trial? Though not free from dross, he comes forth with increased lustre. "Ye have heard of the patience of Job." "The Lord," he exclaimed, "gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." "Shall we receive good from the Lord's hand, and not evil?" "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." How different the language and feelings of the afflicted servant of God from those of the ungodly. The afflictions of Pharaoh, instead of subduing his spirit, resulted in more hardened impenitence. Ahaz, "in his affliction, sinned yet more and more against God." "Thou hast stricken them," said Jeremiah, of his people, "but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction; they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return." On another occasion we find it written—"I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord."

Many a one, under the rebukes of the Almighty, has discovered a spirit of unsubdued rebellion, of which he was hardly conscious before. Little did the people referred to in the text know of the wickedness of their hearts—little did they suspect the crimes of which they would be guilty until

they were put to the test. God led them by a way they knew not. His providences towards them were continually varying. Sometimes they were indulged, and then thwarted; sometimes brought into dangers and straits, and then miraculously delivered. But the effect was the same in both cases. In prosperity they forgot God; in adversity they murmured and rebelled against him. They limited his power, distrusted his goodness, and magnified their trials as undeserved and intolerable, until, provoked by their perverseness, the hand of justice visited them with the most terrible judgments.

III. We may remark, further, that the providence of God often puts the character of men to the test, *by placing them in circumstances of temptation*. The place of our abode, our employment, our associations, the fall of professors of religion, the prevalence of various forms of error, the caresses of friends, the persecution of enemies, the customs and usages of society, the blandishments of earth, our success and our failures—everything, in short, connected with our situation in life, may tend to reveal our spirit and motives. It is thus that God may try our sincerity, our integrity, our humility, our faith, our patience.

A man is often a very different character in one

situation, from what he is in another. A change of circumstances brings his moral principle to the test, and he finds his heart to be the seat of wickedness, which he could hardly, at one time, have imagined it to be. “*Solomon* was a very different man in the early part of his reign, from what he was in those voluptuous periods of his history, during which he brought such reproach upon the throne. Who would have thought that the youthful Mary, the Queen of England, the translator of the Gospels, would ever have deserved the appellation of ‘the bloody Mary?’ Who would have supposed that *Robespierre*, once so sensitive to the sufferings of his fellow-men, that he resigned a lucrative office under the government, rather than condemn a culprit to the scaffold, would have filled Paris with blood?” *Nero*, that monster of cruelty, is said to have been a mild and amiable youth. In the early part of his reign, being called upon to subscribe to a sentence of death, he was melted to tears, and expressed his regret that he had ever learned to write, and it was with the utmost difficulty that he could persuade himself to sign the death-warrant of the condemned criminal. “But gradually he began to indulge a different taste -- to surrender himself to luxury and dissipation. He soon poisoned his friend, murdered his mother, kicked his wife to death, is said to have set Rome

on fire to enjoy the conflagration, and he illuminated his gardens and his midnight drives, by wrapping living Christians in sheets of pitch, and setting them on fire. Cruelty became his delight. He reveled and rioted in the writhing torture, and the shrieks of agony of his subjects." No man knows what is in his heart until he is tried. Peter learned his weakness only by a painful fall. Our easily besetting-sin may, for a long time, remain concealed, but eventually a change of circumstances may cause it to be fully developed. Many a man who has regarded himself, and who has been regarded by others, as a man of integrity, has shown himself to be capable of acts of dishonesty the most atrocious. Many a one who has appeared to have a high respect for the sanctity of the Sabbath, has shown, when placed in circumstances of temptation, that his regard for his own convenience and interest, was altogether paramount. Many a one, who has been thought to be meek and patient, has discovered that he need only meet with some provocation to call forth the spirit of revenge and vindictiveness.

But if the trials to which we are exposed, in the providence of God, has brought to light concealed sins, they have also afforded occasion for *the display of distinguished virtues*. The character of *Abraham* never appears to greater advantage, than

during the severe tests to which it was brought in his repeated acts of faith and self-denial. *Moses*, though surrounded with all the honor, the pomp, and the fascinations of an Egyptian court, evinced the strength of his moral principles, by "choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." *Joseph*, when assaulted with temptation, exhibits his eminent virtue by exclaiming, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God!" The *Martyrs*, rather than sacrifice the cause of truth, sacrificed their earthly all. The self-denying *Missionary* at the call of God, cheerfully relinquishes the society of Christian friends, and the endearments of his comfortable home, to toil, and suffer, and die in a land of pagan darkness. The *afflicted saint*, during many long years of anguish and pain, still continues the same patient sufferer, maintaining "the beginning of his confidence steadfast unto the end." It is thus that many a Christian has been subjected to a trial of his faith, which eventually has been "to praise, and honor, and glory." The reality of his piety has thus been made clearly manifest to himself and to the world, and the grace of God most strikingly illustrated in upholding and comforting his people in their severest conflicts and sufferings.

REMARKS.

1. *How important is it, then, that we study our character as developed in the providence of God.* There is no better way to become acquainted with ourselves than this. We are prone to self-deception, and we need to use every precaution to guard against the evil. If we are truly honest, we shall never be at a loss to bring our religious principle to the test. The daily occurrences of life will afford us ample opportunity for close and impartial scrutiny. God is leading each of us by a way calculated to show what is in our hearts. Every man's character is by some means brought to a test, and if we have been at all attentive to the process through which we have been passing, we can hardly fail to know what spirit we are of.

Let us, then, remember all the way which the Lord our God has led us through the wilderness of this world. In every event of life, whether prosperous or afflictive, let us trace his hand, and study his designs. Let us carefully examine how we have acted when our character has been put on trial — when temptations have been presented to draw us aside from duty, or yield to the commission of sin. Is our religion one that will bear to be tested? Are we prepared to follow the Saviour whithersoever he leads us? Are we governed habitually by the fear of God, and by a

regard for his honor? Are we ready to sacrifice everything rather than sacrifice duty, and the sacred interests of the Saviour's kingdom? Whoever may abandon the truth, do our hearts still cleave to it? Whoever may forget the welfare of Zion, do we prefer her prosperity above our chief joy? Have we discovered in ourselves a determination to do right, regardless of all consequences? Do we find in ourselves a growing conformity to the will of God, and evidence that we are ripening for his eternal enjoyment in heaven? For many years God has been proving us to know what is in our hearts. What has been the result of the trial? "Know ye not your own-selves?" The faith of some, we trust, has received additional confirmation. The doubts which you may once have entertained in regard to your Christian character, are vanishing; and with all the consciousness you have of your weakness and imperfection, you can still clearly trace within you, the lineaments of the new nature, the evidence of habitual devotion to the glory and will of God. But we fear that with others the disclosure is very different. Your frequent relapses and defections must, by this time, have convinced you, that the favorable views which you once entertained of your character, were a wretched delusion. You professed to yield yourself to God, while your con-

duct, as developed in the course of Divine Providence, has plainly demonstrated that the principle of selfishness still retains all its original sway. God has repeatedly put you on trial, and what appeared once as gold, now proves itself to be only dross or tin. Like the stony ground hearers, when tribulation or persecution arose, you became offended. Like the young man who came to our Lord inquiring what he must do to inherit eternal life, your heart still cleaves to the world, and you have gone away sorrowful. Some of you who once professed attachment to the truth, have shown that your hearts incline to error. Some who once appeared to court the society of the faithful, now appear more at home with the ungodly. Some who professed to come out from the world, and no longer conform to its spirit and maxims, are now following the multitude to do evil. Well is it that God does thus afford men an opportunity to discover their delusion, while there is yet a remedy. Better is it to have our hearts revealed to us now, than to meet the disclosure amid the scenes of a coming eternity.

2. *What an importance does the view which has been exhibited in this discourse give to our present existence!* Our present state is a state of probation. We are all on trial for the future. We are all acting out and forming a character that is ulti-

mately to fit us for heaven or hell. The development is continually going forward. Every day we are subjected to new tests; every day is one of triumph or defeat. All the years of our past life God has been calling forth the state of our hearts. Unconsciously, perhaps, to ourselves, we have been continually unfolding ourselves in the various situations in which his providence has placed us. The process of trial is still continued. New occasions will be afforded us to show what are our dispositions and motives, and new evidences will be furnished either of the good or evil that may be found in us. Oh, how solemn, how interesting is our present position! How important the part we are all acting! All of us are on trial, and on trial but *once*. Our whole eternity is staked upon our conduct in time. The character we are now developing will be our character forever, and by that character will our destiny be moulded throughout our interminable existence in the future.

3. *How fully will the propriety of God's dealings with us in this world be vindicated in the next.* The dispensations of Divine Providence are now enveloped in mystery. How many events transpire for which we can assign no reason. Were the government of the world in our hands, we should often direct matters entirely the reverse of what they are. Why does the Almighty suffer the

wicked to prosper, while the righteous are called to pass through such scenes of adversity? Why has error so long triumphed, and truth so long been crushed? Why has "the man of sin," for so many centuries, been permitted to hold the human mind in vassalage, and to retard the progress of a pure Christianity? Why these alternate seasons of revival and declension? Why these divisions and dissensions in the Church of God? Why these frequent apostacies and defections among religious professors? Why these crosses, these trials, these disappointments, these temptations, to which as individuals we may be appointed? The answer to these questions must be reserved for the future. The day of judgment will be the day of revelation. Then the clouds that encircle the throne of heaven will be dispersed. Then the wisdom of Jehovah's plans will be unfolded. Then it will be seen that the Lord "hath done all things well." The great ends of his dispensations, in the development of human character, will all have been accomplished, and the intelligent universe will be constrained to acknowledge that all his ways have been ways of truth, of wisdom, of justice, and of benevolence. Let us then "judge nothing before the time."

"God is his own interpreter,
And he will make it plain."

4. Let me remark further—*Our probation will soon come to a close.* The present state will soon give place to another, in which our character will be formed and fixed for eternity. The great problem whether we are to be eternally the friends or enemies of God, with some of us may be almost solved. The trial is longer or shorter as infinite wisdom may judge best. With some it terminates in childhood, with some in youth, with some in middle life, and with some it is prolonged down to old age. But that trial is advancing, and the eye of God is carefully marking its results. It may end to-morrow; it may end to-day. The Christian's character may be almost matured for heaven, and the sinner's for perdition. Then follows *the judgment—the judgment!* Ye afflicted and tossed, hold out yet a little longer. Soon the Master will be heard saying, “Come up hither; thou hast been faithful over few things, I will now make thee ruler over many; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” Then the clouds that so long hung over your path, will all have vanished. The light of heaven will, in a moment, remove all your former perplexities. The last conflict has been endured, and victory, victory, eternal victory shall be yours.

And then, too, shall the moral history of the sinner be rehearsed. Then will he look back and

remember all the way which the Lord God led him. Then will he contemplate all the blessings which he once perverted, the chastisements which he misimproved, the calls of grace which he rejected, and the various influences under which his character was formed and developed for an eternal retribution. How painful will be to him the retrospect! How overwhelmed will he be to find that he remained inflexible under all that a God of boundless mercy did to reclaim him, and that unholy as he now is, he must remain so forever. Probation is now past, the influence of the Spirit is withdrawn, the restraints of Divine Providence are removed, and the great question respecting his future character and destiny decided, without any possibility of reversion.

SERMON XVI.

HOLDING FAST OUR PROFESSION.

Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.—HEBREWS iv. 14.

EXPOSED as the Hebrew Christians were to the seductive influence of false teachers, they were in great danger of apostatizing from their religious profession, and relapsing into the system of Judaism. To confirm them in the faith and hope of the gospel, constitutes the grand design of the apostle in the epistle which he wrote to them. With this view, he enters into a particular consideration of the superiority of the Christian to the Mosaic dispensation. First of all, he exhibits the dignity of its divine founder. “God who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.”

The Jews entertained the highest veneration for Moses, the deliverer and guide of their nation; but however exalted was his station, the Son of God claims the superiority, being “accounted

worthy of more glory, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house, hath more honor than the house."

The Jews had also the most sacred regard for the priesthood of their dispensation, but Christ, the great high priest of the Christian dispensation, the apostle shows, is exalted far above Aaron, and all his descendants. It is on this fact that he bases the exhortation of the text to Christian steadfastness and perseverance. "Seeing then that we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us *hold fast* our profession."

I. Let us attend to the *duty* which is here enjoined to hold fast our profession.

"To *profess* means to declare publicly and solemnly, something that we believe, or that we intend to do." "A profession of Christianity signifies a public, solemn, and emphatic declaration that we believe the truths, and submit to the obligations of Christianity."

Such a profession, if truly scriptural, implies the following things:—

1. *A conviction of the divine origin of the Christian system.* When a man avows his adherence to any religion, consistency demands that he be fully persuaded of its truth and importance. Every Chris-

tian ought to have a reason for his *belief* as well as for his *hope*. It is not enough that we live in a Christian country, that Christianity is the prevailing religion in the community, and that it was the religion of our ancestors. We should examine its evidences and claims for ourselves. All Christians may not, indeed, be capable of entering into a minute investigation of the various arguments that have been adduced in confirmation of the Christian system, but all should be fully satisfied that they have not followed a mere cunningly devised fable, but the truth of the living God. The Bible contains internal evidence of its divinity, and none who read it with a prayerful and teachable spirit, can fail to receive the conviction from the nature of its doctrines, the sublimity of its style, and its wonderful adaptation to the wants of man, that it was written under divine inspiration. The man who makes a religious profession ought to be so firmly persuaded of this, that his faith will remain unshaken by all the assaults of both earth and hell, prepared not only to defend the truth with his lips, but also to seal it with his very blood.

2. An intelligent scriptural profession also implies an *evangelical creed*. By this we mean a creed that embraces "the truth as it is in Jesus," the great facts, doctrines, and precepts of the gospel. Thus we read of the "form of doctrine," which the

apostles delivered unto the people; and it is recorded of the converts on the day of Pentecost, that "they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine." It is no more a matter of indifference what a man believes than what he does. All genuine experience and holy obedience must be the fruit of faith. It is reasonable, therefore, that in making a profession of religion, a man should be required not only to express his belief in the Christian system, as a whole, but also in its distinctive and fundamental truths. Care, however, should be taken not to exact too much. Creeds and confessions should embrace only the fundamental doctrines of religion, doctrines which are essential to the existence of true piety, and respecting which all Christians are of one heart and mind. Converts ought to be received by the church on the same ground that they are received by Christ, not on account of any peculiarity of sentiment, but on account of their piety.

Every man who makes a public profession of faith, should know *what* he believes, and *why* he believes it. We have too many in all our churches who believe just what others believe, without giving themselves the trouble to inquire whether their faith be orthodox or heterodox, saving or ruinous, just like the man who when questioned as to what he believed, replied, "Why, I believe what the

church believes.” “And what does the church believe?” “The church believes what I believe?” “And what do you and the church believe?” “Why we both believe the same thing.”

Here we have the grand cause of the ignorance, formalism, and superstition, which, for so many ages, chained the human mind, until at length the light of the glorious reformation taught men to think, believe, and act under a sense of their individual responsibility to God.

3. And this leads me to remark further: a profession of religion implies a public declaration of *our actual experience of the power of the Gospel, and of our determination to live, henceforth, in conformity to its precepts.* It is not enough that we are convinced of the truth of Christianity, and that we avow our belief of its doctrines; we must have prevailing evidence ourselves, and furnish credible evidence to others, that we have truly embraced Christ as our Saviour, and yielded to his claims a cordial submission. Christianity is not a mere system of doctrines, but “the life of God in the soul of man,” a regeneration—a new creation—“righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.” There is a road to hell by a more intellectual faith, a cold and smooth orthodoxy, as well as by the open denial and rejection of the truth. The profession which we should make, when we come into the

church, is a profession of *religion*. Such a profession implies a profession of reconciliation to God, penitence for sin, and reliance on Christ as the only ground of our pardon and acceptance. It is not a profession that we mean to *become* Christians, but that we are already such. We enter the church not to be converted, but as already converted. We approach the Lord's table, not that we may there become united to Christ by some magic and mysterious power, going forth from that sacrament, but as already partakers of his benefits. We utterly protest against the practice of those churches who receive to membership any but such as give credible evidence of conversion, as both unscriptural and ruinous. The tares, indeed, will grow among the wheat, but let us not plant them there, knowing them to be tares.

Such is the nature of a Christian profession — such the profession which the Hebrews had made when they embraced the Gospel, and which the Apostle here admonishes them to *hold fast*.

The language implies that there is great danger of *letting it go*. This danger arises from various causes.

There is, in the first place, the *influence of the present world* — not only of its riches, its honors, and its pleasures, but also of its frowns and caresses. The Hebrew Christians were exposed to

the severest persecutions. Their religious profession demanded the sacrifice of all things, and the Apostle commends them in the highest terms, for what they had already endured in the defence of the Gospel. "Call to remembrance," says he, "the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; partly, whilst ye were made a gazing-stock, both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used." We are not now called to suffer as did these primitive disciples; still, it should be a serious question with us all, whether our religion would endure a similar test. As the followers of Christ, we are required not only to be *professors*, but *confessors*. A *professor* is one who publicly declares his attachment to Christ. A *confessor*, one who adheres to him under persecutions and trials. A confessor is synonymous with a *martyr*. Every man who is a *professor*, should be prepared also to become a *confessor*. "Whosoever," says Jesus, "shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven." It is not probable that any of us will actually be called to martyrdom; and hence there may be no particular danger of apostacy from this source. The greatest danger of religious professors, at the present day, arises not from the frowns, but from the *smiles* of the

world. Religion has now become popular, and it often adds to a man's reputation and standing to be in connection with the Christian Church. In general, the world has no particular objection to this step, provided only that we do not carry our religion too far. Here lies our peril. "Woe to you if all men speak well of you." "The friendship of this world is enmity with God." How many thousands have thus virtually renounced their profession, and denied the Saviour. Though they still retain their connection with the church, they are properly "of the world." There is nothing in their spirit or conduct that at all distinguishes them from those who make no pretensions to piety. I need not exhort such not to let go their profession; they have already belied it, and are as certainly in the road to ruin as those who have openly discarded the Christian faith, or embraced another Gospel. Professors of religion need to be most earnestly cautioned here. How many in their eagerness to secure the favor of the world, have let go the crown of life. They want "to go gently to heaven," and have learned the art of so accommodating their religion to a God-hating world, that the offence of the cross has with them entirely ceased. Oh, how difficult it is to remain proof against the world's flatteries. When all things glide along smoothly, then is the time for special watchfulness and prayer.

“Far more the treacherous calm I dread,
Than tempests bursting o’er my head.”

The Hebrew Christians were in danger, not only on account of the persecutions to which they were exposed, but also *from the influence of false teachers, and the imposing rites of the ancient religion.* There was everything in the system of Judaism, from which they had been converted, to render it attractive. It had the sanction of antiquity. It had been founded amid the most remarkable manifestations of the divine presence and glory. It commended itself to the senses by the most splendid ritual and ceremonies. Christianity, on the other hand, had no such recommendations. Its founder was the despised Nazarene; its origin was but of recent date; its rites were few and simple; its ministers a company of fishermen; its disciples the poor and the illiterate. In all this there was but little to strike the senses, or to fall in with the pride of man. How easily was it for the enemies of the Gospel to institute a comparison that would tend to throw dishonor on the Christian religion, and thus lead the members of the Christian church to relapse into the religion of their fathers.

Christians, at the present day, are not unfrequently exposed to similar temptations. There is *Romanism*, with its boasted antiquity, its splendid cathedrals, its pompous ceremonies, its magnificent

vestments, its enchanting music, its array of priests—all calculated to captivate the mind, and draw it away from “the simplicity that is in Christ.” How many have thus been led to make shipwreck of faith, and fall back to that system of corruption, superstition and idolatry which, for so many centuries, has been permitted to enslave the mind of man, and shut out the light of the glorious Gospel. This defection has, in most cases, not been sudden, but gradual. It began with the errors of Puseyism, and ended in all the abominations of Romanism. It meant, in the first place, only to correct the *abuses* of Protestantism; it talked of its “diseases,” its “divisions,” its “baldness;” it spoke of “the great and the beautiful” that attach themselves to Catholicism; it spoke of its sacramental grace and baptismal regeneration; it multiplied its rites and festivals; it introduced its Gothic architecture with its “dim religious light;” it sneered at the preciseness of Puritanism, and scoffed at religious revivals—all the while, however, pretending that it had no intention whatever to go back to Rome; but one departure from the truth is commonly followed by another, until every distinctive principle of Protestantism is sacrificed, and we are thrown back into the very arms of “the Mother of Abominations.” Alas! what sad havoc has thus been made of some who were once

regarded as among the brightest ornaments of the Protestant faith. We need to be continually on our guard against this Romanizing tendency. It is one of the great perils of the times, and many an unwary mind, we fear, is yet destined to fall into the snare. It comes to you like a wolf in sheep's clothing—in the garb of innocence and sanctity. It professes a high veneration for the Fathers, quotes largely from their productions, and claims itself to be the early Christianity of the Church. Take care of the deceiver; for while he promises you freedom, he brings you into miserable bondage. Examine him closely, and the cloven foot will be visible, and you will at once recognize him, not as an angel of light, but as the child of hell.

But if we are in no danger from this source, we may be from others. There is a system of religion which, though baptized with the name of Protestantism, has expunged from its creed almost every article of the evangelical faith. It has the arrogance to set up its boasted wisdom even above the teachings of revelation. It will know nothing of mystery; it utterly discards what it calls the antiquated doctrines of total depravity, of vicarious atonement, of spiritual regeneration, and of an eternal retribution. It is a religion of mere speculation, of mere morality, and of contemptible

self-righteousness—just such a religion as falls in with all the natural pride of the human heart, and which deifies the creature in place of the adorable Creator. Poor Germany, the very cradle of the Reformation, the land where Luther and his noble associates achieved their wonderful conquest—how have its churches been desolated by the blighting influence of its prevailing *Rationalism*. Of the thousands of ministers that abound in that land of science, how few are there whose feet are planted on the rock, and who remain true to the faith of their ancestors.

The *Infidelity* of the present day is of the most insidious character, and presents another source of danger. Unlike that of former ages, it comes to us in the garb of polish and refinement. “It revolts at the vulgarity of Tom Paine, and the indecency of Gibbon, and it admits much that Voltaire and Hume denied. It affects to admire the beauty and the grandeur of Christianity; it even adopts the terminology of its expositions, and allows to the Bible the loftiest place in the scale of universal inspiration. Like Rosseau, it can dwell with rapture on the contemplation of the character of Jesus, and it would not disturb the faith of those who have neither the scholarship nor the leisure to take in the most comprehensive views which the new ‘lights of the age’ have propounded.” “It does

not seek to brand the Bible as a forgery, but only to modify or explain away its claims. It allows the inspired books much in literary glory and æsthetic brightness, but denies them a monopoly of such qualities."

Much of our current literature is deeply impregnated with this scepticism. You can scarcely take up one of our secular papers that is not more or less tinctured with it. Its influence is the most seductive. Many have almost unconsciously had their faith thus undermined; and though, perhaps, not prepared utterly to discard the Christian system, have substituted in its place a mere baptized form of infidelity.

Hold fast, then, to your profession. Cleave closely to *the great and distinguishing doctrines of the Gospel*; and, if necessary, contend ever "earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." However humiliating and offensive that faith may be to the unsanctified mind, it is the only system that is adapted to its wants, and that can ever purify our earth from the evils under which it has so long groaned. It was the preaching of what has been designated as "the doctrines of grace," that gave to the ministry of Whitefield, of Edwards, of Payson, and of others whom God so signally honored, all its power. Nothing but the truth as it is in Jesus has ever yet been found adequate to effect in man a moral regeneration.

Hold fast, too, to the *experience and power of godliness*. Let not your religion be one of mere theory, mere profession, mere form. See that Christ is truly “formed within you the hope of glory;” keep your heart with all diligence; forsake not your first love; guard against the first indications of spiritual declension. If you begin to backslide in *heart*, you will probably soon backslide in *life*. Let the fire of heaven be continually burning upon your altar. Live in daily communion with God—live above the world—live in the atmosphere of heaven.

Hold fast to *the precepts and institutions of the Gospel*, “walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.” Let your life accord, in all respects, with your principles and professions. Avoid the very “appearance of evil.” Let your example be one in which the world can find no flaw. “Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is.” See that your place is regularly filled in the sanctuary—see that the fire on the domestic altar never goes out—see that the closet daily witnesses your devout aspirations after heaven, and your earnest pleadings for the triumph of the kingdom of Christ—see that your children have early affixed to them the seal of the everlasting covenant, and that they are trained up for God and his church. As a pro-

fessor of religion, you have given yourself wholly away to Christ. Whether you live, therefore, live to the Lord, or whether you die, die to the Lord.

II. Let us now attend to the *motive or encouragement* by which the Apostle enforces his admonition. “*Seeing* then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.”

The allusion here is to the high priest under the Jewish economy. It devolved upon him to sacrifice and to intercede for the whole nation. Once a year, on the great day of atonement, after having slain the victim, he entered with the blood into the holy of holies, sprinkled it upon the mercy-seat, and there plead in behalf of those whom he represented.

Thus the Son of God, having sacrificed himself upon the cross, and made an all-sufficient atonement for sin, entered into the temple—not made with hands—into the heaven of heavens, there to “appear before God for us.”

Now, it is in view of this fact that the Apostle admonishes his Hebrew brethren to hold fast the profession which they had made.

The *force of this motive* will appear from the following considerations :

1. You *need not let go your profession.* The

priesthood of Christ secures to you all necessary assistance and support. What though in yourselves you are both guilty and weak, in him there is everlasting righteousness and strength. What though you are exposed to persecution, to temptation, and to various scenes of trial, his grace is amply sufficient to sustain you under all. You may go to him with the fullest confidence, and with the assurance of the warmest sympathy; "for we have not a high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like we are, yet without sin. Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Carry your sorrows and complaints all to him. He pleads your cause before the throne of heaven, sprinkled with his own atoning blood; nor does he plead in vain. "Him the Father heareth always." You need his grace daily, and that grace is ready at all times to be extended to those who ask for it in the name of the interceding Mediator.

2. Further; to renounce your Christian profession *would evince the basest ingratitude*. How infinite are your obligations to the once suffering, but now exalted Redeemer. How precious the sacrifice which he made for you, and how matchless the kindness which he has shown to you. He

left the glories of heaven for a world of pollution and guilt—the adorations of angels for the scoffs and insults of rebel men. He opened his breast to the stroke that was ready to fall on you, and suffered the just for the unjust, that you might be brought to God. He wept that you might smile, and died that you might live forever; and though he has long since passed through the rugged path that had been marked out before him, and has entered upon his throne of glory, his heart of benevolence still remains the same. The same interest that he felt for sinners when he rolled in agony in the garden, and hung bleeding on the cross, he feels now. He “ever liveth to make intercession for us;” and, as our great High Priest, bears us continually on his breast, ready to afford us all needful sympathy and aid. And will you deny such a Saviour? Will you be ashamed of his name? Will you abandon his cause? Will you betray him into the hands of his foes? and that, too, after you have vowed eternal fidelity, and called upon heaven and earth to witness the sacred engagement! Oh, the blackness of such ingratitude! Sooner let my right hand forget its cunning; sooner let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; sooner let this bounding heart cease to beat than that I should be guilty of such baseness.

3. To renounce your profession would be as *un-*

reasonable as it would be ungrateful. The religion of the gospel is the only religion that can sanctify and save the soul. There is but one High Priest to plead our cause—but one Saviour and intercessor. If you are not saved through Christ, to whom else will you look for salvation? To what other name under heaven can you trust but his? What other gospel but his will you embrace? Will you take refuge to Judaism? to Mohamedanism? to Paganism? or to any of the corrupt forms of Christianity? Or are you prepared at once to plunge into all the gloom and horror of infidelity—to persuade yourself that there is no redeeming Saviour—no sanctifying spirit—no resurrection to life and glory? Will you give up the sure word of prophecy for the bewildering conjectures of your own reason? the all-perfect righteousness of Jesus for your own defective virtue? the glorious hopes of the gospel for an eternal sleep, or rather for eternal darkness and despair? “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.”

“Depart from thee? ’tis death—’tis more—
’Tis endless ruin, deep despair!”

4. But this is not all. To renounce the system of the Gospel, is to expose yourself, not only to certain ruin, but to a *condemnation of unutterable aggravation*. “If any man draw back,” says God,

“my soul shall have no pleasure in him.” “It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come; if they shall fall away to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put him to an open shame.” Such an apostacy would seal the doom of the soul forever. Not that any true Christian will ever be suffered to fall so as to perish; for, says the Apostle, “we are not of them that draw back to perdition, but believe to the saving of the soul.” Yet the Christian is constantly *liable* to fall, and can be preserved only by continued watchfulness. Many, too, who have professed Christianity, and who *appeared* to be Christians, have, in the end, turned out apostates. Every approach to apostacy should, therefore, be most carefully avoided. When a man begins to decline, there is no telling where he will stop. One step may quickly lead on to another, until he places himself beyond the precincts of hope, and sinks at last into all the accumulated woes of such as have trodden under foot the Son of God, and done despite to the Spirit of grace, and accounted the blood of the covenant—an unholy thing. How

awful the doom of one who thus apostatizes and perishes !

Hold fast, then, your profession, Christian, unto the end. The struggle may often be severe, but remember it is short. Every hour brings you nearer to your blissful home. Soon the shadows will fly, the clouds will disperse, and upon your vision will be poured the brightness of eternal day. The great high priest of your profession, your forerunner, beckons you forward. The "great cloud of witnesses" all cherish towards you the tenderest sympathy, and are ready to hail you on the plains of immortality. Gird up the loins of your mind, and be sober, and hope unto the end ; for you have need of patience, that after you have suffered the will of God, you may inherit the promises.

But some of my hearers have never yet made a profession. And what, my friends, does this imply ? You profess *no love to God*. Are you, then, his enemy ? You profess *no repentance for sin*. Are you, then, impenitent ? You profess *no reliance on Christ as a Saviour*. Do you, then, reject the offer of his grace ? You profess to have *no interest in the redemption of the Gospel*. Are you, then, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise ?

"*I am no professor*," you say. And do you sup-

pose that that fact releases you from the claims of the Gospel? A man makes no pretensions either to truth or to honesty, does that afford him license to speak and act as he please? You *ought* both to *possess* and *profess* religion. If one man may refuse, then may all. There is no more obligation resting upon me, in this respect, than there is upon you.

“But it is such a serious matter to make a religious profession.” It is—but, then, is it not also a serious matter to decline?

“But there are many who make a profession that are no better than myself.” The fact we shall not attempt to dispute; what is this, however, but an attempt to justify your sins by the sins of others? Must not every one give an account of himself to God?

“But I can be saved without a profession.” Perhaps you can, and perhaps you cannot. All depends on the circumstances of your case. If the penitent thief went to heaven without a connection with the visible church of Christ, that surely can afford no encouragement of hope for you. Christ requires not only that we believe in him, but also that we make an open avowal of our faith. “He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned.” “With the heart, man believeth unto righteous-

ness ; and with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation." And what God has joined together, let no man put asunder. First of all, embrace Christ by a true and hearty faith, and then avail yourself of the next opportunity publicly to acknowledge him before the world. Only do what you mean to do, *quickly*.

SERMON XVII.

TRIUMPH OVER DEATH AND THE GRAVE.

Oh! death, where is thy sting? Oh! grave, where is thy victory?—
1 CORINTHIANS XV. 55.

THIS triumphant exclamation was called forth in view of the complete victory which the Son of God achieves over the terrors and the ravages of death. The language, with some slight variation, is borrowed from the prophecy of Hosea, (xiii. 14,) “Oh! death, I will be thy plagues. Oh! grave, I will be thy destruction.” The full realization of this triumph will take place at the general resurrection, when the last enemy of the Christian shall be destroyed, and when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality.

But though the victory will not be *complete* until then, the song of triumph is commenced already. The moment we become united to Christ as “the resurrection and the life,” that moment the sting of death is rendered harmless, and we may look forward with the prospect of a glorious conquest.

There is nothing that more highly commends to us the religion of the gospel, than the triumph it affords over death. There is in all men an instinctive dread of dissolution—a dread which is greatly aggravated by the consciousness of guilt, and the premonitions of future wrath. We read of those who through fear of death are all their life-time subject to bondage. Men suffer far more from this cause than they are commonly willing to own. Many never allow themselves to dwell on the subject of their mortality, and carefully avoid every thing that may tend to remind them of the fact. “One of the kings of France gave orders that death should never be mentioned in his hearing. Catharine, the Empress of Russia, forbade funeral processions to pass the street near her palace, and required all burials to be performed in the night.” The tolling of a bell, the sight of a corpse, or an open grave, will sometimes agitate the guilty mind with the most painful forebodings. “The wicked often find a prognostic to their fate in a dream, in the howling of a dog, the croaking of a raven, the ticking of an insect, and a thousand other absurdities.”

We know that with some there is a most fatal insensibility both to death and its momentous consequences. This state of mind is reached only by a course of persevering transgression, and the des-

parate resistance of God's truth and Spirit. And yet, even in those cases where men appear to be indifferent to this matter while they are in health, we, not unfrequently, discover the most serious misgivings and painful alarm, as they approach the eventful hour. Death is found to be a very different thing in reality from what it was in anticipation. Their boasted confidence at last fails, and with a "certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation," they close their probation on earth, and pass away to render in their account to God.

We need a religion, my hearers, that will enable us to contemplate our dissolution with composure, and that will sustain us in the last conflict. Such is the religion of the cross. It teaches us not only how to live, but how to die. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace." "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord." "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."

The power of true religion to sustain the spirit in the hour of death, is most abundantly confirmed by the experience and testimony of the pious in every age of the world.

Jacob, when about to die, assembled his sons round him, and after having delivered to them his charge and his blessing, gathered up his feet, (as

if in the act of falling asleep,) and yielded up the ghost. "I die," said he, "but God shall be with you; I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord!"

"I know," exclaimed *Job*, "that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh, I shall see God."

Moses, a short time before his death, having borne his testimony to the faithfulness and grace of God, "died in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord;" or as some say the passage may be more literally rendered, "upon the mouth of the Lord." Hence, the Rabbins tell us that "God extracted his soul with a kiss;" and hence, also a sacred poet of modern times:—

"Like *Moses*, to thyself convey,
And *kiss* my raptured soul away."

How calmly does *Joshua* speak of his approaching decease, and like his predecessor, bear his testimony to the kindness of divine providence, and the truth of the divine promises. "Behold this day I am going the way of all the earth, and ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof."

“ Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,” said *David*, “ I will fear no evil ; for thou art with me ; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”

“ Thou shalt guide me,” said *Asaph*, “ with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. My flesh and my heart faileth ; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever.”

Listen to the language of *Simeon*. No sooner had he embraced the infant Saviour, than we hear the aged pilgrim exclaiming, “ Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word ; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.”

Of *Stephen*, the first Christian martyr, it is recorded, that surrounded with his blood-thirsty persecutors, and amid a volley of stones, “ *he fell asleep.*” What a delightful representation of a good man’s death—asleep in Jesus !

Peter speaks of his decease with the utmost composure. He regarded it simply as putting off this tabernacle of clay, just as we lay aside our garments when we retire to rest. “ I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up, by putting you in remembrance ; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me.”

Paul felt assured that as for him to live was Christ, to die would be gain. As the time of his

departure drew nigh, and he was ready to be offered up a sacrifice to the cause he had so nobly maintained, he breaks forth in the exulting song,—“I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day.”

And how many, in subsequent ages, have derived from the Gospel, in their last moments, the same supports and consolations. Witness the noble army of martyrs. One, as he turns to his fellow-sufferer, says, “Be of good cheer, my brother; we shall sup with our Lord to-night.” Another, embracing the stake, exclaims, “Welcome the cross of Christ! welcome everlasting life!” And another, when his limbs were almost consumed, raising his flaming hands, sings, “None but Christ! none but Christ!”

But let us come down to later times. “See,” said the dying Addison, “in what peace a Christian can die!”

“Oh,” exclaimed Toplady, “how this soul of mine longs to be gone! Like a bird imprisoned in a cage, it longs to take its flight. Oh, that I had wings like a dove, then would I flee away to the realms of bliss, and be at rest forever! Oh, that some guardian angel might be commissioned;

for I long to be absent from this body, and to be with my Lord forever."

Wesley, when so enfeebled as scarcely to be able to speak, desired that all his friends around him would unite with him in prayer and praise. In feeble accents, he attempted himself to sing,

"I'll praise my Maker while I've breath,
And when my voice is lost in death,
Praise shall employ my *nobler* powers."

"I have been," said Samuel Walker, as his dissolution drew near, "on the wings of the cherubim! Heaven has in a manner been opened to me! I shall soon be there!"

"How thankful," said Hervey, "am I for death! It is the passage to the Lord and giver of eternal life. Oh, welcome, welcome, welcome death! thou mayest well be reckoned among the treasures of the Christian!" "The great conflict is over. Now all is done!"

"I bless God," said Dr. Watts, "I can lie down at night unsolicitous, whether I awake in this world or the next."

"I feel," said Law, "a sacred fire kindled in my soul, which will destroy everything contrary to itself, and burn as a flame of divine love to all eternity."

Romaine, as he approached his end, and while

still in possession of his mental powers, cried out, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty! Glory be to thee on high, for such peace on earth and good will to men."

"This sick bed," said the Rev. Samuel Pierce, "is a Bethel to me; it is none other than the house of God and the gate of heaven! I can scarcely express the *pleasures* that I have enjoyed in this affliction. The nearer I draw to my dissolution, the *happier* I am. It can scarcely be called an affliction; it is so counterbalanced with *joy*."

"Is this dying?" said Dr. Cotton Mather. "Is this all? Is this all that I feared when I prayed against a hard death? Oh, I can bear this! I can bear it! I can bear it!"

"People," said Dr. Gordon, "have said that death is *frightful*. I look on it with pleasure. I see no monsters around me. Death! I see no death at my bedside. It is that benign Saviour waiting to take me." When told that he would soon be in the New Jerusalem, where there will be no more dying, his emphatic reply was, "There is none *here*!" How completely was death thus "swallowed up in victory."

And who were the men that bore this testimony to the power of the Gospel? Why, they were men of sober thought, of distinguished abil-

ities, of nice discrimination; not the dupes of superstition and fanaticism, but men of careful and earnest investigation, accustomed to the closest self-examination, and who dreaded nothing more than the idea of self-delusion in a matter involving interests of such unspeakable moment.

We might also refer you to numerous instances of a similar triumph over death, among Christians in the humbler and more retired walks of life; for such experience is, by no means, peculiar to those of superior mental attainments, or of more extended usefulness. Even the feeblest and most despised of Christ's little ones, are often favored in the most remarkable manner in their last conflicts—displaying a moral heroism, and giving utterance to their holy triumphs in expressions of such beauty and force, that they appear to be carried entirely beyond themselves, and to have imparted to them a strength altogether supernatural.

We do not maintain that all Christians are the subjects of this happy experience in their dying moments. In the bestowment of this, as well as all his favors, the ways of God are often to us inscrutable. Some of the best men have died with but little sensible comfort. Their sun, indeed, seems rather to have set under a cloud. Death, instead of being an object of desire, has been one of dread. We must here remember that the fear

of death is entirely natural, and in itself innocent. It is, therefore, no evidence against the piety of a man that he shrinks from dissolution, any more than that he shrinks from any other evil. In some instances the nature of the disease is such as tends to becloud the intellect, and to depress the spirits. A constitutional melancholy may lead the mind to look at everything through a false medium, and to paint the future with imaginary evils. The believer, though he may fear death, may have no fear of its consequences. For wise reasons, Satan is sometimes permitted to make his fiercest assault when he knows that his time is short. But however severe the conflict may be, the victory in the end is sure. Whether the believer departs in triumph, or with doubts and fears, he departs to be with Christ, and join the blood-washed throng around the throne. It is but seldom that the tried and tempted Christian is permitted to leave the world without some testimony to the divine faithfulness. The cloud that may have so long obscured his vision eventually vanishes, and the dark valley becomes irradiated with light. It was so with the Rev. Dr. Scott, author of the Commentary. There were seasons when, in consequence of the disease under which he labored, and the temptations of the adversary, he shrunk with dread at the idea of dissolution. But however

severely his faith was tried, it did not fail him. With Job he could say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." And when the final hour came, "his countenance assumed a placid expression—one might almost say, a sweet and heavenly smile; and the whole appearance was more like that of an infant sinking into sleep than that of a strong man expiring." "Not one thing that he feared came upon him; but every hope was realized or exceeded."

Let us now consider the *ground* of the believer's triumph over death.

1. The Gospel imparts to us victory over death by *affording us the fullest assurance of a future existence*. The reflecting mind must naturally look forward to the consequences of death. What is to follow my dissolution? What is to be the destiny of the rational, thinking principle within me? Is that, too, to die with the body? Does the grave bound my existence, or is there an existence beyond it? And then, if I am to exist forever, *where* am I to exist? In what portion of the universe is my lot to be cast? With what society shall I mingle? And what shall be the nature of my employments? To all these questions, unaided reason affords no satisfactory answer.

"The vast, the unbounded prospect lies before me,
But shadows, clouds, and darkness rest upon it."

Everything around me bears the marks of decay. To the eye of sense, as the beast dies, so dies man also. Am I, then, to return to my original nothing? When once this throbbing heart ceases to beat, is there to be an utter and eternal extinction of thought and feeling? Are all my hopes to be blasted? all my aspirations after a higher existence to be crushed? How appalling the thought, and how gloomy the event of death enshrouded in such mysteries! I turn to heathen sages, but they can afford no solution of my doubts. I turn to modern infidelity, and here, too, all is uncertainty. Sorrowing as I now do without hope, I next turn to the oracles of God, and search there for light upon my dreary prospects. Here my difficulties are all removed. Here I meet with the assurance, that while the body returns to the dust, the spirit returns to God who gave it; that while the spirit of the beast goes downward, the spirit of man goes upward. The Gospel of the Son of God has fully brought life and immortality to light. It assures me of an existence beyond the tomb; and I now resign myself to death, fully persuaded that to die is but to live, and that my removal from the scenes of earth, will immediately be followed by the scenes of eternity.

2. I next remark : The Gospel reconciles the be-

liever to death by *removing his apprehensions of a future judgment*. It can afford me but little comfort, in my dying moments, simply to be assured that I am to enter upon a new existence; the question at once meets me, What is to be the nature of my existence? Is it to be one of happiness or misery? After death, I am told, is the judgment; but how can I, guilty as I am, meet my God, and render in to him my account? If sin bears the marks of his displeasure now, may it not meet with his displeasure hereafter? As a sinner, what have I to expect from him but his eternal frown? Already do I feel within me the premonitions of future vengeance; and if my own heart condemn me, God is greater than my heart, and knoweth all things. Oh, it is *sin* that gives to death its sting; but “thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!” By his death upon the cross, he has opened a way for my deliverance from the dreadful penalty, and my restoration to the divine favor. “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” With humble confidence I rest my hope upon this scheme of mercy. With a tearful, yet believing eye, I look up to my Mediator and Advocate; my cry of agony enters his ear, and moves his compassion; and I hear him with a voice, sweet as the music of heaven, say-

ing, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgression for my name's sake." What now have I to fear? Let the law condemn—let the enemy accuse—let death threaten—it is enough for me to know that "*Christ has died;*" and that through him I am fully absolved from the sentence of wrath, and reconciled to the offended majesty of heaven.

"If sin be pardoned, I'm secure;
 Death has no sting beside;
 The law gives sin its damning power,
 But Christ, my ransom, died!"

3. The believer's triumph over death is also based upon his *prospect of complete and eternal redemption*. His present state is one of imperfection, warfare and trial. He is now a weary pilgrim in a strange land. He dwells in the midst of snares and enemies. He carries about with him a body of sin and death. He is surrounded with scenes of disorder and misery. His vision is often obstructed by intervening clouds, and his best conceptions of divine truth are vague and superficial. Sorrow continually mingles itself with his cup of joy. But death introduces him into a different scene—a world unmarred by pollution, and unsullied by grief. There his nature shall be exalted to the highest perfection, and his immortal powers will be perpetually unfolding. Every vestige of

sin will now be removed ; and all the former darkness that enveloped the mind be dispersed. What were before objects of faith, now become objects of vision. The ransomed spirit dwells before the throne of God and the Lamb—scenes of brightness burst in on every side upon its expanding vision ; all its desires are fully satisfied, and all its hopes realized in fullness of joy, and pleasures for evermore.

Need we wonder that the dying believer, having in prospect such felicity, should even long for the hour of his release ? How insignificant must the brightest scenes of earth appear, compared with such glory. What are the transient pangs of dissolution to him who can look forward to such a blissful termination ?

When St. Pierre returned to France, in a ship that had been absent several years in the East Indies, he tells us, that as “the crew approached their native country, they were all eagerness to discover it. Some of them mounted the rigging ; some of them employed the glass. By and by, an exclamation was heard, ‘Yonder it is !’ Then they became thoughtful and listless. But when they drew nearer, and began to discover the tops of the hills and towers that reminded them of the spots on which they had been brought up, they knew not how to contain themselves. They dressed themselves in their best apparel ; they brought out

the presents designed for their connections ; but when the vessel entered the harbor, and they saw their friends and relations in the quay, stretching forth their hands to embrace them, many of them leaped from the ship, and other hands were employed to bring it to its moorings." And if such ecstasy was felt in prospect of again treading their native soil, and of meeting cherished friends, shall not the believer exult as he draws near the blissful shores of immortality, and he there beholds the dear departed ones from whom he had been separated, waiting with open arms to receive him, and congratulate him on his safe arrival, where the storms of life are all hushed, and adieus and farewells are sounds known no more forever ?

4. The Gospel also prepares the believer for death, *by weakening the ties that bind him to earth*. One of the principal causes of our reluctance to die, may be found in our attachment to the world. We are unwilling to enter upon the future state, because we are so strongly wedded to the present. The closer the tie that binds us to the objects of sense, the more painful must be the stroke that severs it. Naturally, we not only cleave to life, but to the world. Marred as is everything around us by sin, we are still surrounded with spots of verdure—scenes upon which the eye delights to pause, and to which the heart cleaves with fond-

ness. It is no small trial to close our vision upon the objects with which we have so long been familiar, to part with the possessions which we may have accumulated, and, especially, to bid adieu to the friends with whom we may have so often associated. What a struggle must it cost the mother to give up her child, not knowing, perhaps, in whose hands it may fall, or what may be the scenes of temptation and affliction through which it may be called to pass.

But even here the gospel affords the believer triumph. The eye of his faith has been turned to "brighter scenes in heaven." Much as he may be attached to this beautiful earth, his attachment to "the better country" is far stronger. Whatever fruit he may occasionally gather from this desert soil, experience and observation have fully convinced him that here nothing is satisfying, nothing permanent. A voice from heaven has been heard, saying, "Arise, depart, this is not the place of your rest." He loves his friends, but he loves his Saviour more; and though his separation from them may deeply move his sensibilities, with all the redeemed family of Christ he expects soon to be united, in bonds that can never be sundered, and in a world where tears will be unknown. It may, indeed, cost a Christian a severe conflict before he becomes thus "crucified to the world," and

fitted to resign himself with calmness to the stroke of dissolution. The discipline by which his heavenly father teaches him this lesson, is often a long and painful one. One tie to earth is cut asunder after another; one trial of faith succeeds another, until, with the Psalmist, he can say, "My soul is as a weaned child," and with confidence he learns to resign himself, and all around him, into the hands of God, prepared for joy or sorrow, for life or death, as infinite goodness may direct.

5. And then, the dying believer has also *the prospect of a glorious resurrection.*

The condition to which death reduces the human frame is, indeed, melancholy and humiliating. Think of it as it lies in the grave, a lump of inanimate clay, its beauty faded, its light extinguished, its energies paralyzed, the prey of worms and corruption. The form is still there, but all that once rendered it attractive has vanished. It mingles with its original dust, and becomes eventually only a mass of putrefaction.

But the Gospel sheds its beams of light and glory even upon the tomb. It imparts hope; not only in reference to the soul, but also in reference to the body. While it extracts the sting of death, it robs the grave of its victory. "I am," says Jesus, "the resurrection and the life. Because I live, ye shall live also." The flesh of the believer

“rests in hope.” He commits it to the dust, assured not only that it shall be restored, but restored with additional vigor and beauty, fashioned like unto the glorious body of his divine head.

“Corruption, earth, and worms,
Shall but refine this flesh;
'Till my triumphant spirit comes,
To put it on afresh.”

6. The Gospel also *affords to the dying believer all necessary support*. The event of dissolution is, in itself, repulsive even to the Christian. Nature recoils with instinctive dread from the clammy sweat, the wasting disease, and the dying strife. But however dreadful these things may be in prospect, when they actually occur, the grace of God proves abundantly sufficient to bear us up under them all. He has promised his people that he will never leave nor forsake them—that he will be with them in the fires and in the waters, and that as their day is, their strength shall be. How often have these assurances been verified in the actual experience of the saints. He who has given them grace to live, has also given them grace to die. The hour of feebleness and trial has proved to be one of unusual support and triumph. The light of their Saviour's face has dissipated all their doubts, and their souls have been favored with such

rich communications of divine love that their cup of joy has even run over. "It is wonderful and delightful to see how God strengthens the confidence of his doubting children when he is about to remove them to himself. Their faith, which had been only as a spark amidst much smoke of gloom, doubts and fears, blazes out then into a bright and cloudless flame. God seems to have reserved some of his richest cordials of assurance till that season, and they who went mourning here below, and often wet their couch with tears, have departed like the fabled swan, with a song of soft and heavenly music. What scenes, surpassing all that poetry describes or fiction imagines, are to be witnessed in the chambers of dying saints. How often has it seemed as if the veil were drawn aside, and the scenes of the celestial world were actually visible to the eye of sense; so that some have gone so far as to suppose it possible that visions of the heavenly state *have* been granted to those who at the time were treading upon its threshold."

Certain it is that God will not abandon the objects of his love when they most need his presence and support. Believers have been most wonderfully sustained in death. If they are not filled with ecstasy, they are, at least, favored with peace. Relying on the divine faithfulness, and sweetly submissive to the divine will, they have yielded

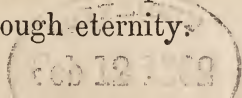
up their spirits into the hands of God, with the blessed hope that death to them would be the entrance to life and joy.

Let us serve God faithfully while we live, and we may be confident he will not forsake us when we come to die. If we wish to die triumphantly, we must live circumspectly. See that your interest in Christ is well secured—that your hope is well founded. Let no sin burden your conscience, no neglected duty darken your prospects. Keep yourself disentangled from the world, and act continually under the conviction that this is not your home. Finish the work that has been assigned to you, and leave not that to be done in a dying hour which should have been attended to before. Put on the whole armour of God, and be in readiness for the last conflict. Lay up in store a good foundation for the time to come. Make yourself familiar with the promises of the gospel, and learn to trust God even in the hour of darkness and affliction. Meditate often upon the last scene, so that when death comes you may meet him, not as a stranger, but as an old and familiar friend.

To those who are yet without hope in Christ, let me say, that you must meet death in all its terrors, and descend into the grave with all its darkness. You may now banish the thought of these things from your minds, but the evil day

will at length come, and it will be a melancholy day to you indeed. How can you struggle, unaided, with the king of terrors? How can you endure the poison of that sting that will penetrate so deep and mortally? How can you look for the last time on this world, your supreme and only portion? How can you enter upon that eternity for which you have made no preparation? How meet that God whose frown will prove to you like a consuming fire? How descend into the tomb, when you know that it will be, not that you may rise to life, but to damnation? You may die in terror, or you may die in apparent tranquillity, but the *consequences* of death will be the same. "After death is the judgment." Ere your poor body has reached its destination in the earth, your spirit has already received its eternal sentence, the undying agony has commenced, and the worm of the pit has seized upon its prey. "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness,"—"driven from light into darkness, and chased out of this world."

Oh, who is prepared to die the death of the ungodly? Who, rather, does not covet the calm and peaceful end of the believer? Accept, then, heaven's antidote for death. Embrace, at once, the provisions of divine mercy. Believe on him who is "the resurrection and the life." United to him, you live forever—separated from him, you are undone through eternity.



Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: May 2006

PreservationTechnologies

A WORLD LEADER IN PAPER PRESERVATION

111 Thomson Park Drive
Cranberry Township, PA 16066
(724) 779-2111

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 016 147 772 2